

DECEMBER 1913

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THE
RED BOOK
MAGAZINE

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IN
THIS
ISSUE

L.J.Beeston
Ida M.Evans
James Oppenheim
James Francis Dwyer



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DECEMBER RED BOOK MAGAZINE

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Rupert Hughes ----- 238

Illustrated by James Montgomery Flagg

George Randolph Chester and Lillian Chester ----- 322

Illustrated by M. Leone Bracker

H. G. Wells ----- 358

Illustrated by John Newton Howitt

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For sheer power in the telling, you will seldom find a story to equal this one.

An Atavic Impulse -----
Two straws in the stream of the city let their imaginations have an afternoon of play.

Perceval Gibbon ----- 226

Illustrated by R. F. James

James Oppenheim ----- 264

Illustrated by Dan Sayre Graves

James Oliver Curwood ----- 271

Illustrated by Frank B. Hoffman

Ida M. Evans ----- 281

Illustrated by J. A. Wilson

John Barton Oxford ----- 292

Illustrated by Grant T. Reynard

James Francis Dwyer ----- 298

Illustrated by William Oberhardt

Edwin L. Sabin ----- 313

Illustrated by Edmund Frederick

L. J. Beeston ----- 339

Illustrated by Frank Craig

Clifford S. Raymond ----- 349

Illustrated by H. J. Mowat

Mary Imlay Taylor ----- 374

Illustrated by B. Cory Kilvert

W. Carey Wonderly ----- 383

Illustrated by Robert A. Graef

Helen Green Van Campen ----- 395

Illustrated by H. J. Mowat

Thomas Gray Fessenden ----- 402

Illustrated by H. J. Mowat

Minnie Barbour Adams ----- 408

Illustrated by Grant T. Reynard

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CLARA LIPMAN

Born in Chicago, December 6th, 1869. Made her first appearance on the stage at Niblo's Gardens, New York, in 1885. Became a leading woman in 1895 and since then has been a star in musical comedy when she has appeared. She has written several plays in collaboration with Edward Freiburger and Samuel Shipman.

Photograph by Otto Sarony Co., New York.



ROSE STAHL

Born in Chicago October 29th, 1870; made her first appearance on the stage at the Girard Avenue Theatre, Philadelphia, in a stock company. In 1888 she toured with the late Daniel Bandmann in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and subsequently played leads in a number of stock companies. In 1903 she starred for a time in "Janice Meredith." She created *Patricia O'Brien* at Proctor's Music Hall, June 13th, 1904, in a sketch entitled "The Chorus Girl." Later the piece was extended to a four-act play entitled "The Chorus Lady." Now appearing in the title role of Charles Klein's "Maggie Pepper."

Photograph by Matzenc Co., Chicago.



EDNA GOODRICH

Born in Logansport, Ind., December 22nd, 1883. Made her first appearance on the stage at The Casino, New York in 1900, in the chorus of "Floradora." Became leading woman for Nat Goodwin in 1905; later married Mr. Goodwin and still later divorced him. Now appearing in title role of "Evangeline."



CATHERINE CALVERT

Born in Baltimore, April 20th, 1891. Her first stage position was that of the "lead" in "Brown of Harvard" for forty weeks of one-night stands. During this engagement Paul Armstrong made a ten-year contract with her, following which she played in "The Deep Purple"—in which she scored a success—"A Romance of the Underworld," and recently in the New York company of "The Escape." At present she is in vaudeville in a sketch by Paul Armstrong.

Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.



EMILY ANN WELLMAN

Born in England, educated at Norristown, Pa., and lived most of her life at St. Louis. Graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York. Played for a short time in "Peaceful Valley," then with Cyril Scott in "The Prince Chap." Became leading woman with Louis Mann in "The Man Who Stood Still" in 1908, and has since been leading woman in all plays Mr. Mann has done.

Photograph by Strauss Peyton Studios, Kansas City.



MARGUERITE LESLIE

Born in Sweden, April 3rd, 1884. Made her first appearance on the stage at the Manhattan Theatre, New York in 1904. From 1906 until within the last year or two she has spent most of her time on the stage in London, but recently has appeared in "The Concert" in this country.

Photograph by Muffett Studio, Chicago.



WILLETTE KERSHAW

Made her first appearance on the stage as *Desdemona* in "Othello" at the age of 14, with a traveling company. For a time was with Walter Whiteside in Shakespearean repertory and later joined the Bernhardt-Coquelin Company. Her first New York success came in "Brown of Harvard." She is now leading woman at the Princess Theatre in New York.

Photograph by Davis & Sanford Co., New York.



LAURA HOPE CREWS

Born in San Francisco. Made her first appearance on the stage in that city in "Editha's Burglar" and later toured in that play. When she appeared with Eleanor Robson in "Merely Mary Ann" in 1903, she had had several years stock experience. For a time she was leading woman for Henry Miller.

Photograph by White, New York.



FLORENCE ROCKWELL

Born in St. Louis. Won her first great distinction in the role of *Juliet* at the age of 15. Has played in support of Richard Mansfield, James O'Neill, Sol Smith Russell, Stuart Robson, Henry Miller, Nat Goodwin and Macklyn Arbuckle. After a tour with Guy Bates Post in "The Nigger," she became leading woman with Robert Mantell. Began this season in the all-star cast of "The Double Cross."

Photograph by Waltinger, Chicago.



CHRYSTAL HERNE

Born in Ashmont, Dorchester, Mass., June 16th, 1883. Her mother was Katherine Corcoran Herne and her father James A. Herne, the actor and playwright. Made her professional debut at the age of 16 in her father's play, "Griffith Davenport." Played leading roles in "Shore Acres" and "Sag Harbor." Was leading woman for Nat Goodwin, and in December 1906 became leading woman at the New Theatre, Chicago. Scored a success in "The Squaw Man" and in "As a Man Thinks."

Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago.



BEATRICE BECKLEY

The wife of James K. Hackett. She has played leading roles with Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, Sir George Alexander, Sir John Hare, Mr. Arthur Bourchier and others. Her most notable recent work has been in "The Walls of Jericho," as *Princess Flavia* in "The Prisoner of Zenda," as *Dorothy Hallowell* in "The Grain of Dust," and in other plays with Mr. Hackett.

Photograph by James & Bushnell, Seattle.



MARY PICKFORD

Born in Toronto April 8th, 1893. At the age of five she went on the stage in children's roles. Most of her education was given by her mother, who traveled with her. Became a member of the Valentine and later the Cummings "stock," in Toronto. Then followed several road tours, a season with Chauncey Olcott and with Belasco's production of "The Warrens of Virginia." Following that, she became a moving picture "star," whence she went into the lead of "A Good Little Devil."

Photograph by White, New York.



Suddenly the lights flamed into being. The act was over. People stirred, chatted. I threw a somber glance over that sea of people enjoying themselves.

Painted by Frank Craig to illustrate "The Immortal Passado," in which L. J. Beeston introduces to the world of fiction that gallant duelist, Count Saros.

December

1913

THE
RED BOOK
MAGAZINE

RAY LONG, Editor

Vol. XXII

No. 2



EXT month we present the first of the stories by Meredith Nicholson. Under the title of "That Affair at Green Bay," he tells a charmingly romantic adventure which has all the dash and go of "The Port of Missing Men," "The House of a Thousand Candles" and "Otherwise Phyllis." And more: It has that wonderful quality, *enthusiasm*: a joy in telling the story; a delight in presenting his characters, and in absorbing you in their doings.

Irvin S. Cobb is in Europe, but he is working hard on his next story for The Red Book.

James Oliver Curwood's enthusiasm made him return from the Arctic earlier than he planned, in order to get on paper the ideas for another big series of stories for our readers.

James Francis Dwyer has just started on a trip around the world to gather more material of the sort that has made his stories famous.

On every hand writers and artists are bending their efforts to fulfill the cardinal clause in our All-Star program: "*Each number must excel its predecessor.*"

The factor which is making The Red Book stand out above the other magazines is that we not only have the best writers and artists, but we have their *enthusiasm*. They are putting into their efforts the very best that is in them. They *love* the work. You feel this as you go through the pages. Their enthusiasm shows in every stroke of brush or pen. It's the quality that wins.

This issue, among other distinctive achievements, brings within two covers, illustrations by James Montgomery Flagg, M. Leone Bracker, William Oberhardt, John Newton Howitt, and that wonderful Englishman, Frank Craig, in addition to all the other producers of excellent drawings whose work is a regular feature.



FLAGG



BRACKER



CRAIG



OBERTHARDT



HOWITT



"Twenty - four again," the Count remarked pleasantly.

The Exiles

Illustrated by R. F. James

IN the inner office, a single electric light bulb hung over the desk at which the manager was putting an end to the day's business. As the firm's foreign correspondent entered, he looked up impatiently, his face broad and intent under the light.

"Well?" he demanded.

The tall, elderly clerk, his hat in his hand, made his request briefly, presenting it, it seemed, like one asking a mere courtesy, with no urgency of manner or tone. The manager kept his hard eyes on him till he had finished, then shook his head.

"Sorry," he said, reaching for the inkwell with his pen, "sorry, Mr. Palmer; can't do it. 'Tisn't customary to let clerks draw salary in advance; in fact,

there's a rule against it. We lost by it once."

The Count von Palme made him a little bow. "I did not know there was a rule," he said.

The manager had returned to his work and did not look up again. "You know now, anyhow," he replied shortly. "Good night."

"Good night," returned the foreign correspondent, politely, and withdrew.

He was not greatly disappointed, for the habit of years had saved him from building on hopes. But his need of money was not the less for that; it made a problem that dwelt continually in his thoughts and deepened a little his customary gravity. It was the only expression he gave to the trouble that preoccupied him; for the rest, his thin, ivory-



By PERCEVAL GIBBON

Author of "The Second-class Passenger,"
"The Adventures of Miss Gregory," etc.

hued face, clean-shaven and aquiline, preserved its manner of courtesy and distinction. He passed on, his homeward way through the thronged evening streets of the city as though he stood aloof, above and apart from their hurrying vivacity, he alone composed and deliberate in the currents of the pavement. It was all that remained to him from the days of his greatness, that little air that separated him from those among whom he worked and gained his wage.

The hour that returned him from the city to Mortlake was generally an hour of refreshment with the Count. The grubby suburban street had the appeal of familiarity for him, and here and there were faces that he knew. But on this evening, the money trouble continued with him; he failed to see the

policeman who saluted him or the nod of the grocer at his door. His way took him under the lee of the great brewery which dominates Mortlake, and on to that range of forlorn houses by the river, houses of pretensions, some of them, spacious and splendid, shut in by mean streets. Their garden walls flank High Street, where the little shops are raucous for patronage, and the tugs on the river hoot under the great windows of their drawing-rooms.

It was one of these that the Count entered, letting himself in with a latch-key. The door opened into a great, bare hall, with stone flags underfoot, where the echo of his footsteps ran before him. The sound of his entrance roused somebody up the stairs; a voice called to him over the winding banisters.

"No suggestions?" he asked.

The Countess Leda leaned forward nervously.

"Our landlord," she suggested. "Could you not talk to him? Could I not talk to him?" She flushed, but held on courageously. "I would not mind pleading with him," she added.

Rodolfe bowed to her. "It is a gracious and a kindly thought," he said. "A thought that does you honor, Countess. But our landlord is abroad; his agent acts for him, and he is not the person to do you the favor you would ask. No; there is nothing for it but the money or the end of the world."

Again there was a pause. Presently the Baron Schottelius, mild and spectacled, spoke.

"I can make no suggestion," he said, gently. "But that if we fail to obtain the money, what is the alternative? I mean—what will happen to—to Her Highness? Can you not take her elsewhere?"

"No." It was the Countess Leda who replied. She spoke with a manner of authority. "We cannot move the Princess. The doctor told me so to-day."

"I see," said the Baron. "I see now. Then we must get the money. We shall not get it by sitting here."

He was a very benevolent-looking little gentleman, with his round spectacles and his gentleness; but he spoke in a tone of conviction.

"I doubt whether that market exists in which we are to be bought at our own price," he explained. "But if it does, talking together will not find it. For my part, I shall make inquiries in the city. There is a youth in the office in which I am employed who knows how to obtain money. His stipend is eighteen shillings a week; but that does not deter him from going into the world. He visits the theatres; he discriminates among vintages; in short, he is expensive and ornamental. I shall consult him."

He looked about him with an air of innocent determination, like a resolute lamb, and took their smiles for a tribute. Colonel Sarasin laughed loud and deep.

"All the same, it is the only thing that has been suggested," cried the Colonel. "It is an idea, at any rate. Suppose,

now, this were my own case, a personal matter of my own? What should I do? Here are seven pounds; I need seventy, and I go into the world, late in the evening. I seek, with care, a suitable place, a discreet house where such things are in order, and I put my fate and my money upon the card which takes my fancy. And either I have my seventy or I am not much further from it. That is what I should do—Lord! it is what I have done, again and again, in the old days when the case was mine."

Baron von Zeipel shook his head soberly. "But this is not such a case," he demurred.

"No," said Rodolfe, thoughtfully, while little Schottelius looked from one to the other in the bewilderment of sudden revelation. "No," he repeated, pondering. "Still—"

They waited anxiously for him to conclude. Only the Countess Leda looked a little distressed. Madame Rieu, at the other end of the table, smoked imperturbably.

"Still," said Rodolfe, suddenly, "it is an idea, for which we must thank the Baron Schottelius. And it is to be considered. Yes, it is to be—" He broke off, with a quick flash of excitement in his vivid face. "Why," he cried, "it's what we must do, if no money is obtained otherwise. Seven pounds is neither here nor there, since it will not save the Princess. How can we neglect to take any chance?"

He looked round at them with a swift vivacity that challenged their minds. On each of them, the idea was dawning as a hope.

"Do you see?" he cried. "Let us continue to try to get money, by all means. We have a week—six days without the Sunday. For four of them let us go on, seriously and persistently, to exhaust all possible sources. *Then*, if we have failed, let us choose one of our number—or two, perhaps—to try this other expedient. For I, for one, shall not dare to leave anything untried."

He turned to the Countess Leda. "Madame," he said, "will you approve of this plan?"

She hesitated. "I will not ask you to leave anything untried," she said.

He turned to Madame Rieu.

"It has my best wishes," she said.

"Then are we to regard it as arranged?" asked Rodolfe, putting the question to the men. There was no answer for a space of seconds.

"I think it is agreed," said Count von Palme.

Johann Rodolfe bowed.

It is an instinct of man to trust the final expedient. Perhaps, for the inhabitants of that old, cheap house there was no market; but that they could never know. To each of them, as the four days slipped by, came a sense that, after all, they had not expended their utmost endeavors to raise the needful money. Little Baron Schottelius felt this acutely; he had yet an idea that a man of adroitness and observation, though bare of capital and empty of business training, could squeeze the city between his hands and see it drip profit as one wrings water from a sponge. He made confession of the matter to the Countess Leda von Palme.

"One sees men rushing about," he told her, "hatless, intent, feverish. They create an atmosphere; they are straining themselves like athletes. That, I think, is the key to modern business; one must be tense, galvanic, swamped in affairs; one must rush about. Now I, Countess,—I have not been rushing about!"

The Countess Leda smiled. "Nor I," she answered.

The fourth day was upon the household before its members knew it; it came with the fateful quickness of a great occasion. The Count von Palme, as he dressed that evening for his audience with the old Princess, was smitten with astonishment at a review of the things he might have done. He felt as though breathing space had been denied him; the world teemed now with opulent possibilities, and he had not had the mere time to exploit them. A vague indignation possessed him at the thought, but this soon passed when he was in the presence of the Princess again, sitting before her, with all the world shut out and its harshness veiled. This, at least, his fidelity to the Princess assured him—a refuge, as it were, from the actual,

a point of vantage against the bitter realities of life. Her infirmity was heavy on her that evening; she lay more loosely in her chair than usual; a barren vacancy ruled her face; her hands trembled and flopped past her guidance. It helped to nerve him, the sight of her witless weakness; all in him that was leal and gallant responded to the summons of her need and her helplessness; and he went from her to join the others with something less than his usual discreet and deliberate gravity.

In obedience to the courteous convention that governed them, none spoke of the matter of the money till the Countess Leda arrived and took her place, and was served with tea and bread and butter. Her coming was the signal for the casual talk to cease; Baron Schottelius left off in the middle of a word.

"But I can explain this more at length at another time," he said. "Let us get to business now."

The Countess Leda looked up. "Does the arrangement still hold?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Johann Rodolfe. "We are reduced to the arrangement you mean. We have not got the money."

"When?" asked the Countess. She was serious and quiet, and spoke with a touch of reserve.

"It *should* be to-morrow night," he replied. "We have no time to waste, Countess. The thing to settle now is which of us shall be deputed to—er—to manage the transaction."

He looked at the Count von Palme as he spoke, and as other eyes followed his, the Count reddened faintly. Among the things he had left behind him when his country ceased to be was the reputation of a skilled and indomitable gambler. He coughed and spoke hesitatingly.

"There should, I think, be two," he said. "We must not forget we are in a strange country; two of us are less likely to be at a loss than one."

Colonel Sarasin nodded his agreement. "That's right," he said. "*He* knows."

Rodolfe was playing with his teaspoon like a man who is embarrassed.

"It is obvious," he said, "that the Count von Palme should be one of these two."

He looked up at the Countess Leda

almost appealingly. She nodded gravely.

"Yes," she said, with half a sigh, "that is obvious. If it is to be done, it should be done by Max." Her left hand found the Count's right and she pressed it.

Those who were watching the Count saw him frown for an instant. Then his face cleared and he threw back his shoulders, with a short laugh.

"I shall be like a ghost, revisiting the glimpses of the moon," he said. "And now for my companion, I nominate my friend Johann Rodolfe."

"Capital," cried Madame Rieu. "Capital!"

"But where will you play?" demanded Colonel Sarasin. "You won't find a sign on a house with 'Dice' or 'Cards' written on it."

Little Baron Schottelius beamed on them like a gray-haired baby.

"I will provide for that," he said, importantly. "I inquired of my young friend, and he will meet you at the book-stall in Waterloo Station and be your guide. He will wear an orchid in his coat to be recognizable; he follows a fashion set by the Lord Chamberlain. His name is Wiggs."

"We shall be very grateful to Mr. Wiggs," said the Count. The Countess Leda was smiling at Rodolfe. He seemed uneasy under it.

No sense of the importance of their mission was lacking in the Count and his companion when they set forth on the following evening. Mr. Wiggs, lingering, his cigarette out, near the book-stall, received a sensible shock when they accosted him. He was a flabby youth, loose in the mouth and puffy under the eyes; and he was much too obviously impressed by the bearing of the pair he had undertaken to chaperon.

"Who'd ha' thought it?" he demanded. "From what I heard, I was expecting a couple of young chaps—from the country, you know; not a couple of gents like you. Still, sport's sport, isn't it?"

"I agree with you," replied the Count, while Rodolfe made an inspection of Mr. Wiggs which was not altogether satisfactory. The young gentleman had too much the appearance of a callow pigeon.

"Well," said Mr. Wiggs, "we might as well be getting on as standing 'ere—unless you'd care for a drink? No? Well, I won't press you. Shall we 'ave a cab?"

They had a cab, and Mr. Wiggs directed the driver to set them down in Leicester Square. "It's not a minute from there," he explained to his companions. It appeared that he could give them no choice of places to go to; he knew only one gambling-hell, or roulette shop on the fringe of Soho, a concern perched precariously in an upper floor where the police had not yet penetrated. "But," explained Mr. Wiggs, "it's on the square. I will say that for it. If it wasn't, there'd soon be rows, an' that's just what a sporting house can't afford in London."

"I should have preferred cards," said the Count thoughtfully. "But since there is no choice, roulette will suffice. It does not entirely do away with the superiority of the wise man over the foolish one."

"Ah, you've been at this game before," hazarded Mr. Wiggs, acutely.

They found their destination at last, in a forlorn street of obscure shops, all seemingly devoted to the sale of French comic papers and picture postcards. There were formalities to be gone through at several doors before they emerged at last into a large room where some half-hundred people were sitting and standing about the figured table and the numbered wheel. Shaded lamps over the table, casting all their light downwards; outside the scope of their rays, the place was in shadow. Play was in full swing when they arrived; a hard-faced croupier with a broken nose presided in his shirt-sleeves, his teeth clenched on the butt of a cigar; and all was governed by a furtive and tip-toe quality, a cautious hush.

The Count received change from a fat woman in tight evening dress—ten half sovereigns and two pounds worth of silver—and with Rodolfe at his elbow went over to look at the play across the heads of the seated gamblers. Both had left their overcoats at the *garde-robe*, and found themselves conspicuous by reason of their evening dress. Most of those about them seemed to be representatives of the various foreign colonies in Soho,



Her coming was the signal
for the usual talk to cease.

with a sprinkling of clerks and shopkeepers, a heterogeneous and dangerous crowd. Mr. Wiggs merged himself into it and was lost like a glass bead in water; it was his own element.

"Is this a place to win seventy pounds?" whispered Rodolfe.

"Perhaps," said the Count, shortly.

Red had won several times running, and was being backed by a large number of players. Suddenly the Count drew a half sovereign from his pocket and placed it on black, where it lay solitary. The croupier shot a swift glance at him as he placed his stake.

"Game's made," he cried, and started the wheel.

"Now we shall see," said the Count to Rodolfe. "If red wins again, he will pay nearly a hundred pounds. If black wins, he has only to pay me."

"Black and odd wins," announced the croupier; and the Count picked up his money.

A few minutes later, a chair fell vacant and the Count took it. Rodolfe stationed himself at his back, and the Count began to play. Many looked at him, at his demeanor of quiet and repose, at the precise mask of his face and the calculated assurance of his play. He was careful and moderate; from backing one of the colors, always in favor of the bank, he advanced to staking on squares of twelve numbers, and for a while did not push his game further. Little by little, he collected in front of him a small heap of coins.

Rodolfe, who knew little of the game, watched him in fascination; it was so dainty, so wonderful an art to see in exercise, the out-manoeuvring of blind chance and cheating in alliance. The formal, silent man seated at the table was not the Count von Palme he had known through lean years of clipped and starved life, an old-maidish man who had outlived his purpose. This was another, an altogether more formidable person, serene and calm where all others were fevered and tense, a gambler of the grand school, one of those who fortify the vice with their own stubborn virtues. He noted it all with a keen palate for its dramatic flavor, for Johann Rodolfe was always an artist.

A couple of hours slipped by, and at last the Count leaned back.

"We have half," he whispered. "Thirty-five pounds. The table cheats like a Chinaman."

Rodolfe shrugged. "It is all in your hands, Count," he said. "You are master here."

The Count nodded. "I am going to play in earnest now," he said. "You must remember it is a game of chance. Or it should be."

He leaned forward and spoke to the croupier.

"What is the maximum?" he inquired.

The croupier turned and looked at him and at the money before him.

"Call it five pounds," he replied. He seemed a little puzzled, for some reason; Rodolfe, looking at his hard fighter's face, thought he detected signs of ill-ease.

The Count only nodded. He scanned the table before him and pushed five pounds forward. Everybody looked up with quick interest, and from the further end of the table there was a craning of necks. The Count slid the money onto a single number.

"That is number twenty-four," he said aloud. The croupier scowled. A minute later he raked in the money. Mr. Wiggs, peering over the heads of the sitters, vented a cackle of laughter. The Count smiled, and thrust forward another five pounds.

"Twenty-four again," he remarked pleasantly. He looked at the croupier as he spoke, and once more that functionary scowled. The Count's stake was raked in as before.

There was lively interest in the Count now, for five pounds was a sum of some dignity in that place. Rodolfe, the practiced observer, was able to deduce that from the faces, as a third and a fourth stake of five pounds went the way of the first and second. At the fifth, the fat lady who acted as money changer came over to look on, and the croupier suddenly spat his cigar out and began to fidget and look at the clock. He glanced again and again at the Count, sharp, speculative glances shot from under narrow brows.

"Twenty-four again," said the Count.

A Greek opposite him shut his mouth with a snap, and with the air of a man who has reached a determination, threw a half-crown on the same number. The Count shook his head slightly, and the Greek darted forth a hand and picked his coin up again.

"Thirteen, red and odd," announced the croupier, and swept in the Count's five pounds.

Scarcely had his rake passed over the table when the Count thrust forward the last five pounds. He leaned both elbows on the board, and looked down to the croupier. His pale, clean-cut face was impassive save for a little smile; he stood out, in that crowd of hucksters, like a jewel in the mud. The croupier evaded his eye and its quiet significance. Rodolfe saw that the man's face was suddenly shiny with sweat.

"Twenty-four again," the Count said, in his pleasant, rather high voice. "And this wins," he added distinctly.

"Oh, does it?" said the croupier.

"Yes," replied the Count.

There rose to Rodolfe's mind at that moment a quick remembrance of what it all meant, a flash-light picture of the household at Mortlake, its welfare balanced in the coming turn of the wheel. The interest and novelty of watching the play had banished it till then. He felt a gush of excitement rise in him, and laid a hand on the Count's shoulder.

"For God's sake!" he breathed.

The Count shrugged him off.

"Yes, this wins," he repeated.

Rodolfe saw the croupier bite his lower lip and nod his head like a man who resigns himself. He eyed the Count no more, but started the wheel with a jerk of impatience, and sat looking at it. It slowed, and the ball fell into the basin and buzzed there uneasily; Rodolfe cleared his eyes with his hand. He couldn't see the number as the wheel stopped, and he blanched as a cry arose from those who leaned over it.

The Count was sitting back in his chair, unmoved, his tranquillity intact, like an eggshell that has come unbroken through an earthquake. There was a

surge of people, a babble of various tongues, incomprehensible and bewildering. Then the croupier rose; his rake thrust something down the table. Rodolfe saw the Count's hands fingering through a heap of money.

"Game's off," cried the croupier, unsteadily. "Bank's broke," he explained.

Rodolfe went down the stairs and into the street with the Count's arm in his and wonder surging in his mind like a tide.

"How much have you won?" he asked breathlessly.

"It should be a hundred and sixty pounds," replied the Count, tranquilly. "But it was three pounds short."

Rodolfe took the fact in slowly, and flavored the relief and succor of it at length. But when they were ensconced in the train, he burst out:

"But what was the meaning of it?" he cried. "You played like a madman, and the table was unfair. Why did he let you win?"

The Count von Palme leaned back in his corner and crossed his legs.

"My dear Johann," he said, "to be a gambler, one must be a man of personality. But to be a cheat, one must be a man of much greater personality. Consider now! The croupier was braking the wheel so that I should lose—that is, using a device which makes the wheel stop on any number he chooses. Anyone could do that once or twice. But to do it thrice running calls for some courage; to do it four times demanded hardihood as well. The fifth time is the real test; did you notice how he relieved himself of his cigar and braced himself? The sixth time shook him badly; his nerve did not last it out, so that at the seventh, he did as I counted on him to do: he gave me the game. It was merely a contest of individuality, or personalities—myself against a type which I understand very completely."

There was a pause as he concluded. Johann Rodolfe broke it.

"They will be sitting up for us tonight," he said, inconsequently.

"God bless them!" answered the Count von Palme.

A COMPLETE RÉSUMÉ OF THE PREVIOUS CHAPTERS OF "WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY?"

THIS greatest contemporary American novel is the "Vanity Fair" of American literature. It gives as brilliant and accurate a picture of New York society in 1913 as Thackeray did of the English foibles and ostentation of his time—a picture of that metropolitan society of to-day which uses its wealth and leisure in the constant pursuit of new thrills, and which cares not what its members do but considers it the unpardonable sin to be found out.

Lieutenant Harvey Forbes, U. S. A., a handsome Southerner just home from fighting Moros, is introduced into this society world by Murray Ten Eyck, a Knickerbocker of fashion. At first Forbes looks on the display with intolerance. He sees the never-ending parade of luxuriously dressed women and thinks: "All these women are paid for by men. What do the women give in return? What do they pay?" He notes the delicate, satiny sides of the automobiles and feels that they, like the occupants, have been made fragile by too much polishing. But he is to learn that those satiny cars are of steel and that the languorous women in them are of steel too, and capable of making or breaking the lives of strong men like himself.

Persis Cabot, a young woman of wealth and beauty, in New York, is the center of an exclusive circle. Ten Eyck presents Forbes. Ten Eyck believes Forbes has a small fortune, but in fact he has only his army pay.

Forbes is fascinated by Persis and follows her about to the different cafés where society folk turkey-trot madly in the same throng with men and women who dance and drink till they are maudlin. Forbes learns the dance and is in a frenzied rapture whenever Persis slips into his arms.

In constant attendance on Persis is "Little Willie" Enslee, insignificant but heir of enormous wealth. Everywhere Forbes hears Persis' name linked with Enslee's. Mrs. Neff, a widow, who is also a member of this "set," expects Persis to marry Enslee without loving him, just as she expects to force her daughter Alice, who is stealing meetings with young and impecunious Stowe Webb, to marry the elderly Senator Tait.

Persis, who is really engaged to Enslee, begins to feel insecure; so when Forbes asks her if she is engaged, she evades.

Forbes gives a luncheon for Persis' party at the Ritz-Carleton. He is dazed at the cost. While they are eating Enslee declares he is going to take a day to run up to his country place, which is not yet opened. Winifred Mather, a substantial beauty always in the party, exclaims that they will all go along. Persis clamors for it too, because it will be fine for once not to have servants standing around eavesdropping. Even Mrs. Neff agrees to go as chaperon, and finally Enslee yields and goes to order supplies.

Persis gets a message from her father that he is in financial trouble. Forbes takes her home at once in a taxi. The windows of the taxi are made opaque with rain. Forbes takes Persis in his arms and she allows the embrace. But she is furious with herself a moment later for fear some one has seen.

Forbes now decides to win Persis. He goes to Enslee's house party, where his host's stately mansion and magnificent estates—Enslee's strongest fighting weapons—will be arrayed against him. The first morning there gives him his first opportunity.

Forbes tubs early and goes out. Persis comes to her window to shut out the light for another nap. Forbes tosses lilacs to her. She dresses and they roam while he tells his love. Persis keeps him at arm's length, because she is afraid of what the people at the house will say if some one peeps through the blinds. That day Enslee urges Persis to marry him at once. She refuses and meets Forbes again late that night for a walk.

The spell of the night is on them and they yearn with love. "Kiss me," finally says Persis. Forbes, exultant, puts his first great kiss on her lips. He tries to tell of his poverty, but fails, fearing to spoil the delight of the moment.

The moon is gone when they creep back into the house. They stop to kiss good-night again in the upper hall, and as they close their doors, Forbes hears a third door close. Some one else had been in the hall!

*The GREAT NOVEL of
NEW YORK SOCIETY in 1913*



What Will People Say?

By RUPERT HUGHES

Author of "The Old Nest," "Miss 318," "Excuse Me," etc.

Illustrated By
James Montgomery Flagg

XXX

LIEUTENANT FORBES had known what it was to bivouac in the black of night in Mindanao, surrounded by wild men native to the trees and as stealthy as the dark, and armed with blowguns, carved and painted and sometimes studded with gems, but emitting poisonous darts. He had stood then, trying to peer them out in the gloom, knowing they were there and unable to descry them.

And so he stood now, gripping his door-knob lest it turn in his hand and betray him. He had listened for Persis' door to close, and, after the many good-

nights they had whispered in the dark hall, the gentle click of her lock had sounded as pleasant as one more farewell kiss.

And then he had heard some other door closed softly and the same tiny click had startled him like a crash of lightning. He realized that he and Persis had lingered in a social ambush. They were in no peril of life, but the unknown spy might let loose upon them an envenomed dart from the silent, the sometimes jeweled blowgun of gossip.

Forbes' eyes fought in vain against a dark that was like a black bandage. He felt sure that it was not Ten Eyck's door that had thudded so slyly shut. But he could not even guess whether it were

the door of Enslee or of one of the women.

He waited and waited, hoping that a light would be made, but there was no glimmer along any sill. Even Persis was evidently undressing in the dark or in the moonlight that must be pouring into her room.

Forbes visioned her there, chilled and tired, her sleepy hands fumbling at the sepals of her clothing till she stripped them off and stood glimmering in the blue a moment before she slipped into that creamy nothing he had seen her wear at the window. And then he visioned her with chattering teeth and shivering hands immersing her lonely beauty in the sheets snow white, snow cold—like a nymph returning to her brook in winter time. He felt immensely sorry that she should be cold and alone.

He wondered if she prayed at her bedside, and he thought of her in one long white line of beauty, from her brow bent down, to the palms of her little bare feet upturned on the floor. He hoped that she would not pray too long, lest she catch cold. And this seemed a kind of sacrilegious thought, like individual communion cups.

All these things he thought as he waited, gripping the door knob and listening fiercely for a sign of the eavesdropper. And lest she should have been too cold to pray, he prayed for her, that calumny might not be the reward of her innocent love, the sweet surrender she had made of her discretion and her good repute into his keeping.

Yet he feared for her. He doubted that the secret observer would think her free of guile. He did not fear for himself. The man would be regarded at worst as a successful adventurer, but the woman despised for an easy victim or a willing accomplice.

Forbes reproached himself for bringing this blight on Persis. It was he that had dragged her protesting from the house, persuaded her to steal forth, led her into the distance and kept her while the respectable hours slipped by.

The only atonement he could make was to proclaim as speedily as possible that their love was honest and that they

carried the franchise of betrothal. Tomorrow he must make sure of her. He closed his door with the utmost caution, and got out of his clothes and into his bed with all possible silence. He was exhausted with the long day of love's anxieties and triumph, and the new anxiety he had stumbled into. He had yet to tell her how far from rich he was. He had yet to persuade her to leave this golden world of hers for the parsimony he offered.

Perhaps her courage or her love would flinch from the sacrifice. Then he could not protect her from the unknown sneerer. Indeed, if the unknown listener were Enslee, Forbes would not stand as the protector of Persis at all, but as a ruthless tempter of another man's love. If it were Ten Eyck he would have ground for reviling Forbes as one whom he regretted sponsoring, a wolf admitted into the fold in sheep's clothing. Or if it were one of the women—everybody knows what mercy females have for one another.

In the chaos of his perplexities he fell asleep and did not waken till the whirr of the telephone on his wall called him from his slumber. Winifred's voice gruffly informed him that his breakfast was waiting for him.

When, as little later as he could manage, he joined the group already at the table, he tried to read in the "Good-morning!" of each some telltale hint. Mrs. Neff's languor might mask a reproach. Alice's casual glance might mean aversion. Ten Eyck's reproving frown might be a comment on his tardiness or a rebuke for his bad faith. Winifred's curt manner might be merely her way of play-acting a surly cook, and it might represent disgust.

Willie Enslee smiled—smiled! Was it a crafty sneer? Or was it simply his stinted hospitality? If Enslee knew that he was clandestine with Enslee's sweetheart, how could Enslee smile? He must eliminate Enslee at least from his suspicion.

Persis alone greeted him with heartiness; her blessed and blessing eyes were like kisses on the brow. But Persis did not know that they two had been



Forbes thought of her in one long white line of beauty, from her brow bent down, to the palms of her little bare feet upturned on the floor.

watched. She had closed her door first. How was he to tell her, how put her on her guard?

Forbes ate his breakfast in the mixed humor of a detective and a suspect. He studied the others and they seemed to study him or to avoid him. He could not settle upon even a theory.

After the breakfast, he sought an opportunity for a secret word with Persis. She was told off to the bed-making squad. She was even to do his room! He caught her at the foot of the stairs. She warned him with a gesture and he broke the news to her without preparation:

"Last night when we were saying good-night, some one else was in the hall."

Her lips parted in a gasp of terror and her cheeks whitened. "How do you know?" she whispered.

"I heard her—or him."

"Who was it?"

"I don't know. I can't even guess," he mumbled.

"Do you think it could have been—All right, Mr. Forbes, I'll be careful of your razor blades."

This last aloud, for the benefit of Mrs. Neff, who came by and spoke with icy severity—was it ironical or sincere?

"Chambermaids are not allowed to flirt with customers in this hotel." She went on up. And Persis followed helplessly, leaving Forbes distraught.

Later he saw her at his windows beating his pillows.

The intimate implication thrilled him, and he threw her a kiss while pretending to take his cigar from his lips, and she retreated into the embrasure to answer it with a secret waft from her own lips.

Forbes had hoped to be invited to ride with Persis and had put on a pair of civilian riding breeches and his army puttees. But he was ignored in the program for the day, as it was announced by Enslee, who decreed that he and Persis would try to ride over to the Sleepy Hollow Country Club, by the quietest roads they could find, while the rest were to motor across. They would all have luncheon together, and return in the same way— "If that horse of

mine doesn't break both of our fool necks," he added.

"What about Persis and her horse's neck?" Ten Eyck asked, speaking Forbes' own uneasy thought.

"Oh, Persis can ride anything," Willie said. "She's a born centaurette, while a horse and I are like oil and water—only, oil always stays on top and I don't."

But Forbes did not feel so sure of Persis as Willie did. He ventured to say as much when she appeared, but she laughed at him.

"Horses are not among my afraids. I've ridden since I was graduated from the back of a Great Dane to a Shetland pony. I've got rubber bones; when I fall off I bounce back."

He could make no further protest and hung about in the futile discomfort of an old woman. There was no reassurance for him in the behavior of the horses, which two stablemen brought up the hill with a difficulty that led Ten Eyck to comment:

"Are those men leading horses, Willie, or flying kites?"

Persis was wearing the bowler hat and the coat and breeches and boots Forbes had seen her in that morning in Central Park. He knew how well she rode in the bridlepath, but he feared for her in the motor-swept roads. He told her so, but she laughed again.

She set her foot in the stirrup, flung her leg across the saddle and warned the groom away. While Willie put one foot in the stirrup and went hopping hither and yon in pursuit of it with the other, Persis was getting acquainted with her own mount, humoring him in his school-boy hilarity, and sharply repressing any malicious mischief. The moment Willie was aboard, the two horses whirled and charged down the winding road in a mad gallopade. And Forbes' heart galloped in his breast as he wondered if he would ever see Persis alive again. He had felt that same fear for her that first day when her landaulet shot forth so wildly. He was always feeling afraid for her.

XXXI

The motor passengers were in no such

haste to be gone, and they loitered, watching the mad riders on their break-neck descent, now hidden, now revealed again by a swerve of the road, a jut of hillside, or a group of trees.

Forbes watched Persis till the last curve blotted her from his sight and yearned after her like a child left behind from a picnic. He looked at his own riding costume ruefully, and said that he would better change. But the others would not wait for him. Mrs. Neff said: "They're very becoming, keep 'em on. You've got good legs and you make Willie look like a wishbone. Come along!"

After a few swift miles of country whose old walls, well-groomed meadows and shapely forests gave a look of England, the land rose higher and higher until the car swung out at last on a height commanding a river in the utmost contrast with England's stream.

The Hudson came down between its hills in tremendous calm, and the Palisades opposite were no longer sheer cliffs but a congress of ponderous masses like reclining gods along a banquet board.

Forbes' heart could not rise to the bigness of the scene; it was too much tossed between the hope that the next turn might reveal Persis, spick and span on a glossy horse, and the fear that some of these countless whizzing, hooting motors might frighten the beast into panic and hurl her under the swarming wheels.

Ten Eyck seemed to note the anxiety that kept Forbes' eyes shuttling this way and that, for he remarked as if quite casually:

"Small chance of meeting Persis and Willie here. They said they'd try to keep off the busiest roads, and Willie has probably got himself lost somewhere in the twists and turns of Sleepy Hollow. Sleepy Hollow is where Willie belongs all right, for he is the most headless headless horseman that ever threw a pumpkin. I'll bet he turns up late to luncheon and makes a spectacular entrance on the back of his neck."

Ten Eyck was as nearly right as a prophet is required to be.

The car reached its destination with-

out encountering Persis or Willie. More majestic than the usual country club, that of Sleepy Hollow was approached by a stately entrance gate. The road wound between broad lawns where children played among tropical thickets of veteran rhododendrons, tall as trees and glowing with flowers as big and brilliant as Chinese lanterns. The club-house was a pile of creamy brick, tall and spacious as a hotel. The servants were in livery, some of them already in summer white with dark collars and lapels to distinguish them from the guests. But the reason for the name of Sleepy Hollow did not transpire from the active life of the members or the green heights of the situation.

Ten Eyck and Winifred offered Forbes a racquet in their tennis game, but he preferred to be alone with his loneliness. He accepted Ten Eyck's suggestion, however, that he might care to go round the links, and Ten Eyck procured him a bag of clubs and a caddy, promising him ample time for at least nine holes before Persis could arrive.

Mrs. Neff meanwhile had vanished with Alice. She had learned that Senator Tait was on the golf course and had dragged Alice forth.

As Forbes worked his way up a vast green ridge broad as the back of a tidal wave, he saw at the top of the height a bunker thrusting out into the sky, like the comb on the top of a Spanish woman's head. He paused for his approach, to let two women clear the way. He recognized Mrs. Neff and Alice, but they did not see him. Mrs. Neff seemed to be in a mood of displeasure. There was vexation in her very heels.

Thinking the pathway clear, Forbes picked the ball up neatly in his iron, and sent it over the edge of the bunker with a hurdler's economy of gap. And just as it escaped the top, a head arose, followed by a pair of shoulders.

Forbes gasped an *ex post facto* "Fore!" but it was drowned in the snort of pain and rage from the man whose left shoulder blade stopped the ball.

As Forbes ran forward with abject apologies an angry face peered over the bunker and roared out:

"Damn it, man! where do you think you—why, it's you!—Harvey, my boy!"

"Senator Tait!" Forbes cried, darting for one corner of the bunker as Senator Tait dashed for the other. They paused, turned back, and made for the opposite ends, stopped short foolishly in the middle and laughingly clasped hands over the ledge.

"I'll come round," said Forbes, and the Senator met him, put his arms about him and hugged him with a fatherly roughness. After he had told Forbes how much he had grown and how fine he was, and Forbes had exclaimed how young the Senator looked, the Senator hugged him again:

"I can't believe that you are yourself. The first time I saw you was in your poor father's arms; you were about half an hour old and your father said you were very handsome. I couldn't see it at the time, but you've improved. I must say, though, I'm rather hurt at your not looking me up before. Mrs. Neff has just told me you've been in town nearly a week."

"I—I've been very busy," Forbes stammered.

"So I hear, you young scoundrel!" Tait growled jovially. "You're at the heart-breaking, heart-aching age, and no time to spend on old duffers like me, when young beauties are drooping on every bough. But what's this Mrs. Neff tells me about your being rich? I hadn't heard it. I hadn't expected it either, for your father was a better fox-hunter than a financier. What did you do—invent some new explosive—or a new gun?"

Forbes smiled bitterly and explained the foolish mistake, too foolish to correct at first—and later embarrassing.

The Senator stared at him a moment searchingly, with a tender inquisition, before he said:

"Unless you're golf-hungry, let's send the caddies back and have a talk."

"By all means," Forbes agreed, and even as he cast his glance about in search of his caddy, he looked further to see if Persis were not visible somewhere from this Pisgah-height. He was fond of the old man, but he loved the young woman.

Forbes' caddy was standing by the ball and came in with it, cannily claimed his pay and tip for the full course and hurried back with the Senator's caddy to pick up other fares. They took both the golf-bags with them to put away in the locker-room.

Tait and Forbes strolled aside from the traffic of the golf course and found a quiet seat in the shade:

"And now tell me," the Senator said, "but first have a cigar?"

He took out a portly wallet stuffed with brown-backs, the famous cigars made specially for him in Havana. Forbes accepted one and sniffed its bouquet.

"It's a shame to waste these in the open air," he said, and sprang a cigar-lighter he carried, holding the flame to Tait, who waived it: "You're not smoking?"

The Senator sighed and shook his head. "Doctor's orders."

"Then I won't."

"Go on; I carry them for my friends. I love to see others enjoy what I can't. Well, I will smoke just one to celebrate the prodigal's return." And he took a cigar from the case as tenderly as if it were forbidden ambrosia. As Forbes made a light again, he asked:

"What's this about doctor's orders? You're the kind of picture that goes with the testimonials—after taking."

"I'm a hollow sham, my boy; bad heart, bad liver, fat and sluggish, ordered to Carlsbad, but I hate to go. May have to," he puffed. "Did you see Mildred at the club-house?"

"No, I don't think so. I don't suppose I'd know her. She was a little tike in short skirts when I saw her last."

"She's a big woman now—regular old maid—fanatic on charities—fine mind—great heart. Thinks too much about the poor and the downtrodden to be very cheerful company, but somebody ought to look after 'em, I suppose. She's one of those hotheads that are trying to make the world over. Sounds hopeless, but they do get a lot done. Her conversation is really what has turned my hair white.

Things that used to be kept for the medical books or smoking-room conversation, she tosses off glibly, earnestly and—to me! And spends my money, too, on scientific rescue-work among women who—whew! And to think her mother and I didn't dare to tell her things! She tells 'em to me now! She knows more about the seamy side than I do. But she's wonderful, Harvey. I'm afraid of her, but I do admire her and love her. Women like her make these mad tango-trotters look pretty cheap."

Forbes resented the unintended criticism on the wonderful soul the tango-mania had enabled him to meet and know so well so soon. He murmured something formulaic about his eagerness to see Mildred, and then he added, with a little hint of raillery:

"You congratulated me on my wealth. Am I to congratulate you the same way on your success with little Miss Neff?"

The Senator stared at him: "My success with little Miss Neff? What do you mean? Who's little Miss Neff—Alice?"

"Yes."

"What success should I have with her?"

Forbes was confused and tried to back out, but Tait would know, and Forbes at last explained: "Alice says that her mother is trying to marry her off to you."

Tait's eyes popped and his mouth gaped stupidly; then he swore with sonority, and blurted out: "Do you mean that that old harridan of a Mrs. Neff has gone mad enough to—why, Alice is younger than Mildred! Why, I thought of her as a little tot. I tweaked her cheek and told her how sweet she was, and never dreamed she'd grown up yet. Well, I'll be double-d—is Alice in on the game, too?"

"Oh no, Alice is crazy to marry young Stowe Webb."

"Poor old Jim Webb's boy, eh?" Forbes nodded. "Well, why not?"

"He has no money."

"Oh, she's one of those."

"He hasn't even a job."

The Senator puffed like an unmuffled cut-out and he frowned like a pirate; then he began to chuckle like a

pirate ordering the plank put over the side:

"He hasn't a job, eh? Well, I'll get him one. I'll pay Cornelia Neff in her own coin. Make a fool out of me, will she? Well, we'll see what an old politician can do to countermine an old lady."

"Speaking of politics," said Forbes, "the papers are full of the possibility of your being an ambassador somewhere. Is there anything in it?"

"Well, my old friend the President has written me a few letters and whispered it in my ear; but I don't want to go. I'm too old; I like my own country and my own slippers. Foreign languages and foreign cooking and all that would play the devil with me. I don't want to go."

Forbes laughed at the spectacle of a big rich man pouting like a reluctant child against having a sweetmeat forced on him:

"Then why are you going?" he grinned.

"How did you know I was?"

"Because you said you didn't want to. We only say 'I don't want to' when we're just about to."

Tait looked at him in surprise. Forbes was not the type from whom one expects epigrams and generalizations. Tait laughed sheepishly:

"Well, I'll tell you, Harvey. There's just one reason; I'm worried about Mildred. She's getting in too deep with her crusades and causes. She's done enough. She mustn't lose her own life as a woman—a wife—a mother. I'm old-fashioned enough to believe that that's a woman's first business, as a man's first business is to build a home and keep it. Afterward, all the charity and uplift they can do is legitimate and worthy. But first pay your debts, I say, before you make donations. Now I can't pry Mildred loose from her clubs and committees. No marrying young man will go near her. There's no encouragement to the pink nonsense of love in an atmosphere of tenement house needs, tuberculosis exhibits and the harrowing statistics of white slavery.

"I got an idea that if I went abroad as an ambassador, she'd have to go along

to take care of me, and run the social end of the embassy. She'd have to dress up and give dinners, and go places, and dance and meet cheerful people, and—well, who knows? Anyway, my last business on this earth is leaving my only child provided for, and I'm worried, because—because, well, I'm too fat around the heart, and my neck is too thick, and the doctor tells me to be ready. You understand?

"My father went that way. He had to be very careful of his health, and one day when he was about to go out in the rain, my mother told him he must wear his rubbers. He bent over to pull on an overshoe, and—he just went on over, and sprawled out on the rug—dead."

He stared off into space and seemed not to be a venerable old man any more, but a lonely orphan with the sad eyes of boyhood in the presence of death.

Forbes knew what it means for a man to think of the death of his first great man, his father; and his hand took the Senator's and wrung it.

Tait looked up and smiled sadly and returned the pressure with his big, soft fingers.

"I wish I had a son to leave her with; then I'd feel better; but my only boy—well, he married the wrong woman and she drove him to the dogs, deceived him and tormented him and—finally he had to make her divorce him, and he loved her in spite of it—he was ashamed of his love, but he couldn't kill it, she couldn't kill it—and drink couldn't kill it. But it killed him. —Oh, Lord, Harvey, it's a cruel world and we're all helpless! I could have done so much for my boy—but I couldn't help him in the one way he needed help. I couldn't make the woman over.

"Don't make his mistake, Harvey. Don't let a pretty face and a fascinating body blind you to the heart inside. Don't let yourself love the wrong woman. You can do a good deal with your heart if you keep a tight rein on it and keep it on the right road. There are fine enough women on the straight road, just as beautiful, just as passionate with the right man. If only—" He paused.

Rummaging among the confusions of

his griefs, he had come upon a bright hope. What if Forbes should be the man to win Mildred away from her avocations, back to the main business of love? He was such a man as even Mildred could hardly ignore or despise. He had little money, but Tait had more than enough for the two, and he had made many a poor man rich.

He smiled. He felt like apologizing to Mrs. Neff for stealing a hint from her. Why should not old men engage in the pleasant chess-game of match-making too? What better task could he undertake than making this beloved son of his old comrade the husband of his own beloved daughter?

The idea was so exhilarating that it almost leapt from his heart. But he was politician enough to realize that such a plan would be frustrated in advance by premature publication. This was a benevolent conspiracy that must be kept dark.

He studied Forbes with admiring affection. His heart went out to him as to a son or, better yet, a son-in-law. He put a hand on Forbes' shoulder to claim him, just as Forbes started with a sudden elation, just as a light broke forth in his eyes.

Senator Tait followed the line of Forbes' gaze and made out a man and a woman on horseback turning in at the gate marked "Exit Only." This was like Willie Enslee. If any gate could excite his interest as an entrance it would be one marked "Exit Only."

Forbes spoke: "Sha'n't we stroll back to the club-house? I'm expected there for luncheon."

"By all means," said Senator Tait. "And I want you to meet Mildred again."

"I'd love to," said Forbes absently. He said nothing more, but strode on so rapidly down the steep slope that Senator Tait had to take his arm for support and to hold him back.

"You're visiting at Enslee's, Mrs. Neff tells me," the old man panted.

"Yes."

"Excuse my fatherly familiarity, but how can you afford to gad with these wild asses?"

"I can't."

"What's her name?" Tait laughed.

"I may be able to tell you later—and I may not."

And then, not heeding the connotation, he exclaimed as Persis emerged from the eclipsing shrubbery: "There's only one woman can ride like that."

Senator Tait stared and made her out. He pleaded earnestly: "For God's sake, boy, don't love her. Of all women, don't love Persis Cabot. She's the most heartless of them all."

Forbes was calm enough to pay Senator Tait's white hair the homage of silence. Tait, feeling the import of his silence, grew uneasy and demanded:

"Harvey, it's not possible that you love her? Actually love her?"

"Is it possible not to?"

"But you've not known her long."

"No, but I've known her well. Do you know her?"

"Yes, and I knew her mother. Once I thought I loved her mother. But I had less money when I proposed to her than I have now—Heaven be praised!"

"Heaven be praised?"

"Yes, for she might have married me. Harvey, a certain part of the society here is like a big aquarium. The people are all fish—the men goldfish, the women catfish. Their blood is cold—Lord, how cold! Just look at their eyes! Hard eyes, hard hearts. They despise sincerity; they laugh at honest emotion—"

"But Persis has soft eyes," Forbes broke in, "and a warm heart."

"Has she?" Tait sighed, feeling that the siren had already sung Forbes' wits away. "Well, maybe, in the moonlight. But she'll soon freeze. Now if she had been born poor—"

"But, Senator, the rich can't all be bad," Forbes complained.

"The rich are no worse than anybody else, as a class," said Senator Tait. "My father and mother were rich, and they were as good and sweet and simple as any poor people that ever lived. They were like *Romeo and Juliet*; and the *Montagues* and *Capulets* were both rich. Now if young Mr. Montague had been poor, we might have had a different

story. Or, if you had only gone into finance."

"It's too late for me to dream of money. I'm a soldier."

"And it's too late for you to dream of Persis Cabot, not merely because she's wealthy. One class is as good as another; it's the set that counts. And she gallops with the rich runaways. Their life is one long stampede. There are rich women who toil like slaves for the poor, who lead lives of earnestness and purity, who respond to every appeal, and make organized charity possible. But there are others, rich and poor, that never think of anybody but themselves, have no real pity except for themselves, never toil or fret except for their own amusement. And those people gravitate together into colonies and cliques. Don't run with that pack, Harvey."

He was not the first man of old that had warned youth against beauty. Nor was he the last that shall fail to be heeded. He tried another tack.

"Does she think what Mrs. Neff thinks—that you have money?"

Forbes did not answer, except with a blush. The Senator spared him any pressure on that point. He said simply:

"Enslee has a lot of money—more than her father has. In fact, her father is in a very bad plight."

"How do you know?"

"I am about six bank directors, Harvey, and a few other things. Her father is about to be forced into involuntary bankruptcy; her father's pet railroad goes into receiver's hands to-morrow."

"Poor Persis!" Forbes groaned.

There was such anguish in his tone, that the Senator gripped his arm hard, and murmured:

"Do you care so much for her?"

Forbes stopped short and stared into the old man's eyes: "A man like me loves once, and loves hard. If I lost her, my life wouldn't be worth the snap of my finger." And he added in a raucous voice: "Or the click of a trigger."

The Senator leaned heavily on him and closed his eyes in a wince of pain. He had heard his own dead son speak just that way. When he opened his eyes, Forbes was smiling, glowingly:

"Look at her, Senator! She's as beautiful as an angel. I can't let Enslee have her. Look at him. He's as afraid of his horse as his horse is ashamed of him. What's he up to now? Hold that horse, you fool! He'd drive a hobby horse into hysterics. And now he's sent Persis' horse in the air. What's the matter with him. Why doesn't he—"

But the fault was not Enslee's, nor was he so bad a rider as an expert like Forbes might think. As the event proved, even Persis could not control her mount in the face of what was happening unseen by Forbes. A chauffeur, relying on the fact that he was on the exit road, was driving a big red six at high speed along the curves. He had not seen Enslee and Persis till he was almost into them. He swung aside so sharply that he almost capsized, and ran over something sharp enough to rip open a shoe.

This was just one too many automobiles for the horses Persis and Enslee rode. They had been curbed and scolded and kept in hand all morning, but to have a dragon leap at them from the cedar trees was too much. They went frantic, dancing erect and threshing the air with their fore-hoofs. And then the tire exploded like a cannon, and they went mad. They feared nothing but what was behind them; nothing could hurt them but their terror.

They crashed through cedars and rhododendrons and plunged across the lawn to the clear space of the golf-links. Forbes saw the demon look in the white eyes of Persis' horse. He had seen mustangs in that humor shake off their tormentors and tear them wolfishly as with fangs.

"He's got the bit in his teeth!" he groaned. "He'll kill her! My God, he'll kill her! She can't hold him! I've got to get him somehow."

He had a fierce impulse to meet the horse, leap at him, catch him by the bridle and the nose and smother him to a standstill. But Senator Tait had seen a policeman killed trying to stop a horse so, and he flung his arms about Forbes.

"No, you won't!" he gasped. "You can't stop him. I won't let you risk your life—not for that woman."

"Let me go, let me go," Forbes pleaded, unwilling to use his strength against the old man. But Tait clung to him, seized hold anew as Forbes tore his hands loose; fell to his knees, but still held fast and was dragged along, groaning:

"My boy, I love you like a son. You sha'n't risk your life—not for her!"

Then suddenly his clutch relaxed; his fingers opened; he rolled forward on his face, his white hair fluttering in the grass.

And Forbes, hardly knowing that he was released, felt himself free and ran with all his might to intercept the plunging monster, who came snorting his rage, flinging his huge barrel this way and that, and shaking the white slaver from his mouth.

XXXIII

Persis met equine wrath with female rage. The fiercer the horse plunged, the harder she beat him with the crop, the more bloodthirstily she tore his side with her keen-spurred heels. Her hair flung looser and looser, and at length set free her hat, and then shook out its own tortoise-shell moorings and flew to the winds. She sawed at the horse's head, stabbed him with the spurs, railed at him with shrill voice, and fought him as a Valkyr might have fought her charger panic-stricken at the noise of battle.

Even the old man who lay in the grass clutching at his heart could not but feel a thrill at the wild beauty of the girl; her long hair flowed and writhed smokily; her face was the more commandingly beautiful for the very merciless hate that fired it; her girlish body in her boyish costume gave her a strange charm. Her thighs gripped the horse's sides visibly, like arches of steel. All this beauty Forbes saw also; and more, for he saw with the eyes of idolatry; and yet more again, for his beloved was in mortal danger. He ran in a frenzy of fear and determination. As he and the horses met on their converging paths, Persis shrieked to him: "Keep away! Keep away!"

But he leaped for the bridle with both hands flung out. She, however, would not let him endanger himself. She threw all the power of both her arms and her weight on the further rein, dragging the horse's head aside till he swerved out of Forbes' reach.

Forbes sprawled on the turf, but at least he had not been struck by the hoofs or knees of the horse. And then the horse came down in turn, thrown out of his stride and with his head brought round so sharply that he went over on his shoulder and almost broke his neck.

Persis spun through the air like a pin-wheel and those who witnessed the affair gave her and the horse up for dead. But she clung to the bridle and got up on all fours. For once Persis was awkward. She and Forbes met and stared like quadrupeds, and the horse rolled over on his belly and stared too.

What had almost been a tragedy was turned to a farce by coincidence. If all the corpses in the last act of "Hamlet" should rise and stare at one another—as they do when the curtain is down—audiences might roar as the golfers and the club servants and members roared at this spectacle.

Willie meanwhile had vanished over the hill like the headless horseman Ten Eyck had likened him to.

After the first automatic recovery, Persis was overtaken by a wave of terror she had had no time to feel. She turned ashen about the mouth and a queasy feeling sickened her. Her elbows gave way and she sank to the ground.

Senator Tait came up with difficulty, forgetting that he had been perhaps nearer death on that green battlefield than any other of the fallen. He heard Forbes wailing as he gathered Persis into his arms:

"Persis, my darling, my angel, speak to me! Are you dead?"

Persis opened her eyes with a flash. She began to realize that she had been very conspicuous. "Of course I'm not dead. But what's worse, my hair's down. I must be a sight! And my breeches are torn. Oh Lord, why wasn't I killed romantically. Turn your backs at once."

The two men stared all the more, but

she released herself from Forbes' arms, rose to her feet, with some twinges of evident pain, put up her hair with what few hairpins remained of her store, and borrowed a pin from the Senator's lapel to mend a rip that let one exquisite knee escape to view. A caddy came running up with her hat, and she thanked him.

"Come along," she said to Forbes. "I feel as if I were on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House."

The horse got clumsily to his feet, all the battle knocked out of him, and followed weakly, till she handed him over to a groom.

Eager to escape the stares that met her and the sympathy and felicitations that greeted her, she walked so rapidly that the Senator dropped back. She found herself alone with Forbes and she murmured:

"You were wonderful to try to save me as you did."

"As I didn't," he groaned. "You wouldn't let me."

"No, I don't want you ever to risk anything for me. But I'm just as grateful—and more than that. If there weren't so many people looking on, do you know what I'd say?"

"What?"

"Kiss me!" The words came so unexpectedly he forgot that they were in the subjunctive mode. He took them to be in the imperative, and came near obeying. He checked himself in time.

And then Ten Eyck and Winifred and Mrs. Neff and Alice and others of her acquaintance crowded round, summoned by the flying rumor of the incident. At length some one exclaimed:

"But where's Willie?"

"Good Lord," Persis gasped, "I forgot all about him."

Some one else who had been on the links described Willie's disappearance over the brow of the hill. He had been still attached to the horse when last heard from. But his prospects were reported to be poor.

By the time Persis had reached the Club-house and had undergone the ministrations of a maid, who was also a seamstress, Willie came limping up on



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JAMES MONTGOMERY FLACE

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the terrace, where Persis was seated with the others.

"Oh, there you are, my dear," Willie drawled. "And not a bit hurt: not a hair turned so far as I can make out, eh? And here I've been worrying myself sick about you—simply sick."

"Well, I'll go out and break a few bones, if it will make you feel easier. But what happened to you? Where's your horse?"

"You see, that beast I was on went gallumphing up the hill playing the deuce with putting greens, until he came to that big bunker at the top—you know?"

"Yes."

"Well, he refused it."

"What did you do?"

"I took it alone."

"Where's your horse?"

"I don't know. I hope to heaven he breaks a leg or rips himself open on barbed wire or something."

There was a vindictive ferocity in his voice that surprised Forbes.

The luncheon, which Ten Eyck had commanded, was announced just then and they all adjourned to the dining room. Forbes resented Enslee's habit of "my-dear"-ing Persis, yet felt so happy in the thought that he should soon confound his rival with the news of his own triumph, that he made no protest.

Suddenly, in his joy at being near to Persis, he remembered that he had neglected to meet Senator Tait, after promising to meet his daughter. He did not venture to leave his own table, but as soon as the luncheon was eaten and while Winifred and Mrs. Neff and Persis sneaked off somewhere for their after-coffee cigarettes, he sought out the Senator and found him with a tall and self-reliant girl whom he introduced as Mildred.

Forbes made the usual remarks one makes to a little girl one meets again as a grown woman. She had indeed changed, from the shy and leggy little minx to this robust, ample-bosomed bachelor girl with the sorrows of the world on her shoulders, and pity and courage warring in her resolute eyes.

Recalling what the Senator had said

of her appalling lore, Forbes was at some loss for words. He said at last the obvious thing, waving his hand toward the great park and the panorama of river and headland spread out beyond.

"Wonderful, isn't it?"

But Mildred, instead of an equally commonplace answer, sighed: "I suppose it is, but I—somehow I can't take much pleasure in beautiful things like these. I keep thinking how the poor kiddies and their worn-out mothers in the tenements would love to see it—and never will. And when I think how much money it costs to build and keep up this place, I can't help saying to myself, 'How many loaves of bread this would buy for hungry waifs!—how many pairs of shoes!—how many lives it could save!' I want this big lawn all overrun with little newsboys and factory girls and sick men and women."

Senator Tait shrugged his shoulders and smiled at Forbes.

"Isn't she hopeless?"

"She's very splendid," Forbes said with admiration and also a little awe. The father felt this in Forbes' manner, and it strengthened his resolution to rescue his daughter from the rescue-work.

Forbes was ashamed of himself for feeling a little chilled by Mildred's irrepressible enthusiasm for sorrow. He blamed himself, not her. But when Persis returned, he thanked heaven for beauty untroubled by any deeper concerns than its own loveliness, and for a heart that inspired desire for itself rather than pity for the submerged myriads.

He bade the Senator and his daughter as cordial a good-by as he could and promised to meet the Senator as soon as possible in town. Then he forgot them both, for when Enslee's automobile swept up to the Club-house door, Enslee's two horses were also brought up, and Forbes imagined Persis riding away again on that dangerous beast with that dangerous escort.

Enslee stared at the horses in disgust: "There are those brutes of mine, and not a bit hurt either, worse luck. I'll have them both sold to somebody who'll work them hard and beat them harder."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said Persis. "If you don't want them, I'll take them."

"And get your neck broken, eh?" Enslee snarled. "Oh, no, you won't. Look at that beast. I'll have his throat cut for him."

There was something in his voice like the edge of a knife, and it made Forbes' blood run cold. Enslee had unsuspected streaks of viciousness. But Persis was used to this quality of his nature and it did not alarm her. When he said: "Hop into the car, Persis; I'll send a groom over for the nags," Persis shook her head: "I propose to show my horse who is master. He can't spill me all over the landscape and get away with it. You ride home in the car and I'll go back as I came."

"And a pretty fool you'll make of me," Enslee wrangled. "Besides, I haven't ridden much lately; I'm saddle sore."

"I've been riding every morning in the Park," Persis insisted. "I'll lead your horse back—unless—" She hesitated and looked at Forbes, who leaped at the cue.

"I'll be glad to ride him, if you don't object, Mr. Enslee."

Enslee stared at Forbes, saw nothing ulterior in his eyes, and yielded with a bad grace:

"Oh, all right. Go ahead. Only don't sue me for damages, if you get pitched under an auto."

"I won't," Forbes laughed, elated beyond belief by the unimaginable luck of riding at Persis' stirrup for miles and miles.

And so they mounted. Persis' horse was humbled beyond struggle, but Enslee's big black had lately tossed his rider over his head. He tested the seat of his new visitor. Forbes was a West Pointer, a cavalryman, and the horse had not made more than one pirouette before he understood that he was bestridden by one whom it was best to obey.

Willie tried at first to keep the motor back with the horses, but Persis ordered him to go about his business, and turned off the hard track to a soft road.

And now at last they were free, Forbes and Persis, cantering along a plushy road, a lover's lane that mounted

up and up, till they paused at the height to give the horses breath.

Back of them the Hudson spread its august stream between mountainous walls. Before them the road dipped into the deep forest seas of Sleepy Hollow.

XXXIII

"Is it possible that we're actually alone?" Forbes gloated, turning in his saddle to take her in in her brisk youthful beauty.

"I shouldn't exactly call it alone up here on the mantelpiece of the world in broad daylight," Persis smiled. "But it's nice, isn't it?"

"Wonderful, to be riding with you!"

"I'm immensely happy," she said. "Even the horses know the difference. This morning they hated each other. They wouldn't trot in rhythm, or alongside, and they fought like snapping-turtles. Now look at them nuzzle and flirt. Ouch! that's my game knee you're colliding with. It would be better if I rode side-saddle. There were advantages in old-fashioned ways. You ride splendidly, don't you?"

"Do I?" he said. "As you told me the first time I met you, I'm glad you like me."

"I more than that, now."

"More than like me?"

"Umm-humm!"

"Love me?"

"Umm-humm!"

"If I could only brush away all of these houses and people, and take you in my arms."

"I doubt if there's a desert where nobody is peeping. They used to tell me God was looking when no one else was."

"Well, He would understand."

"Maybe He would see too much. But the human beings don't understand. And they're everywhere. Oh, Lord, I'm so sick of other people's eyes and ears. All my life I've had them on me—servants, nurses, maids, waiters, grooms, footmen!—sometimes I think I'd love to live on a desert island. Could you buy me a desert island somewhere—a thoroughly equipped desert island with hot and cold water and automatic cooking?"

"I'll see if there's one on the market."

"It would be a fine addition to the usual town and country house and yacht. Had you thought where you will have your —our country place?"

"Er—no, I hadn't."

"Shall you have to be at your post much? Are the office hours very strict?"

"Pretty strict. We'd have to live on Governor's Island, you know."

"Really? In one of those little houses?" He nodded. "I saw them there once when they gave a lawn-fête. I never dreamed I'd live in one of them. They aren't very commodious, are they?"

"That depends."

"Nichette—she's my maid—would make an awful row, and my chauffeur—I suppose we could keep him. He expects to marry Nichette."

"Does he?"

"If they can stop fighting long enough to get married. Does a garage go with the house we should occupy there?"

"I doubt it."

"No garage!" she exclaimed. "How should we manage? It's rather awkward getting to the Island, too, as I remember—a ferry or something. I don't suppose you could arrange to live uptown somewhere, and do your army-work by telephone on rainy days?"

"I'm afraid not."

His heart was thumping. She grew more exquisite as she grew more fairy-like in her visions. He could not tell her the truth—not yet—not at least till they had passed through the woods ahead, where there was a promise of opportunity for at least a moment's embrace—at least one hasty kiss.

They jogged on in silence awhile, she pondering like a solemn child, he longing to give her the toys she kept imagining. They drew into the thicket, shady and soft, with a breeze that wandered about murmuring "Woo! woo!" and leaves that whispered "Kiss! kiss!" and a deep forest voice that seemed to mumble "Love!"

No one was visible ahead; he turned and stared back. They were shut in by a protecting hill that seemed to close after them like a door. He leaned sideways with an arm outstretched to enfold

her waist. But with a quick lift of her hand and a scratch of the spur, she carried her horse aside and ahead.

"You mustn't!" she warned. "Really!"

"But no one can see us."

"So we thought in the dark hall. And there was some one there. Do you know who it was?"

"I haven't been able to find out."

"I have!" She spoke triumphantly.

"Who was it, in heaven's name?"

"Who would be your last guess?"

"Enslée."

"Why?"

"Because he smiled—because he let me ride with you."

"That shows how much a man's reasoning power is worth. It was Willie."

"Why do you think so?"

"I know so. He told me."

Forbes was dazed; he marveled aloud: "And yet he smiled? He let me ride with you?"

She laughed. "Willie is such an idiot. He knew it was you, but he thought the woman was—Mrs. Neff or Winifred. That's why he smiled at you."

Forbes chuckled a moment, then flushed, as Persis went on: "He could only hear our whispers, you know, and you can't distinguish whispers. He thought it was a great joke. He laughed his head off. And I laughed too. It was delicious. It came near being serious, though. He heard the door open below and thought it was a burglar. He had a revolver and a flashlight. The flash wouldn't work—thank the Lord! Then he was going to shoot first and call 'Who's there?' afterward. That would have been nice, wouldn't it? Then he heard our—our kisses! He didn't shoot. He kept quiet, smothering his snickers! He could only judge by the closing of the door who was who. He recognized your door, and he got mine mixed. But you're not laughing."

"It doesn't seem very funny to me," Forbes admitted. "My love for you is no joke. I don't enjoy sneaking about in dark halls and having you mistaken for some other woman."

She stared at him and her mischief turned to a deep tenderness. She rode closer and put her free hand on his

bridle hand. "How right you are! That's the way I want you to feel, the way I want you to love me." And then she laughed again.

"What else do you suppose Willie told me? To-night he's going to wait till you sneak out with your lady bird, and then he's going to lock the door and make you beg for admission. That'll be nice, eh?"

"That means I can't be with you to-night."

"It seems so."

"And you won't let me kiss you now!"

"But we couldn't go spooning about in the daylight, could we? Not even if we were an old married couple, could we?"

"I suppose not. But when—when are we going to be an old married couple?"

"Whenever you say," she said with a shy down look. "We'd have to announce our engagement, I suppose, and then it would take a long time to get my clothes made."

"Would it?"

"Yes. I haven't a thing. I'm in perfect rags. And besides, a bride ought to begin new. Isn't it thrilling to be talking of such things! Am I blushing as red as I feel?"

"You're like a rose on fire."

"I feel deliciously a ninny. Can you get away from your hateful army for a good long honeymoon, do you suppose?"

"I don't know. Where would you like to go?"

"The Riviera is nice. A trip around the world would be pleasant."

"Wouldn't it!" he groaned. "But I'm afraid I couldn't."

"I suppose the country would be afraid to let you get so far away with all this talk about trouble with the Mexicans. Oh well, it doesn't matter so long as we are together, does it?"

"Do you feel that way?" he asked hungrily.

"Terribly. I love you—I love you hideously much. Watch out! Will you never learn that somebody's always looking—a whole picnic this time."

They were nearing Pocantico Lake. In a thicket on its shores a wagonload of villagers had finished its basket-lunch

and scattered in a rather dreary effort at inexpensive happiness.

As Forbes and Persis rounded the turn that disclosed the revelers, a homely couple evidently in search of a less populous nook severed a highly unromantic-looking clasp. It was hard to see how either took much pleasure from the other. The man was in his shirt sleeves with his hat askew; the girl was shapeless and freckled in a shapeless freckled dress. They squinted their eyes against the sun and gaped at the tailor-made couple on the varnished horses, and stumbled into the roadside gully to let them pass.

"Isn't it ghastly," Persis whispered; "they were trying to spoon—just as we were. And we both broke up both of us. It makes love rather a silly, shabby spectacle, doesn't it?"

"I don't think so," Forbes said. "I should say that instead of their making love shabby, love covered them with a little glory."

"That's a much prettier way to put it. But shabby people—oh Lord, look at that family, dear! If that's wedded bliss, give me chloroform."

It was a doleful exhibit on the edge of the woods: a fat, paunchy, sweaty man was taking his picnic in carrying a squally, messy baby. Alongside him a bunched woman with stringy hair waddled in anserine stupidity, hanging to one of her husband's suspenders.

As they rode on, Persis shuddered: "What an odious thing to be like that! Come on. Let's run away from it." She lifted her horse to a gallop and fled so fast that Forbes, for all the authority and help he gave his horse, could not overtake her, since hers was the better mount. As he followed lumbering and scolding his black beast, he felt that she was indeed too fleet, too elusive for him ever to capture and keep.

But at length she relented, and reined in till he came abeam. Then she urged her horse on again and they galloped in the mad élan of a cavalry charge, with boots griding together. She forgot her wounded knee, and he forgot his doubts of her.

"If we ride fast on levels, we can take

more time later," she said; "then they wont wonder at our being so late."

She was always thinking of what other people would think. He wished that she would forget the eternal audience, the unbroken spectators, now and then. And yet it was intelligent. It was wise. Only, he loved her more when she was uttering those childish plans of hers for a life in which the funds were to be taken from a fairy purse automatically replenished as fast as it was depleted.

Yet he feared both of the women she was: the cautious and forethoughtful, who might refuse his penury, and the spoiled demander who might resent it.

By and by they came to a grass-grown road that lost itself in ferns and undergrowth. Forbes looked at Persis. Her eyes consented. He laid his bridle hand on the left side of his horse's mane, and shifted his weight a trifle. And his horse shouldered hers into the wilderness. Heads bent low, the horses mounted with cautious hoofs till the ferns were brushing their saddle-girths. The prattle of a brook somewhere lured them further and they pressed on into a fog of leaves and crackling boughs and flowers. Birds cried warnings, and shot through the branches, bearing news of the invasion. Others in sentimental oblivion did not budge, but went on sawing the air with silver phrases shrilly sweet.

Suddenly the brook was visible, rushing here and there through the woods and making noises that were rapture just to hear. And with that music of water and woods, and that multitudinous beauty about them, they gazed only into each other's eyes, inclined together and locked arms and breasts and lips in close embrace. They clung together till the soulless horses, nibbling here and there, sundered them.

And then they slid from the saddles and slipping the bridles to their elbows, walked on with arms about each other's bodies, and eyes so mutually engaged that they stumbled like blind folk. At last she sank to the ground at the edge of the brook, and he, instead of helping her up, dropped down at her side.

He took her in his arms again and kissed her and laughed at her:

"I reckon you'll warn me now that the horses are looking."

"No," she said, "but one of them is standing on one of my coat-tails."

So he rose and led the horses to a tree a few paces off and tied them there. When he came back he found her swinging her little boots over a still pool in an alcove of the brook. Its quiet surface mirrored her feet from beneath quaintly. "We're at the antipodes already," he laughed, but she sighed, "I wish we were married and all."

"Why?"

"I'd take off my boots and dip my poor aching feet in that water."

"Why don't you?"

"In the first place, I don't know you well enough to go barefoot before you. In the second, somebody would be sure to come along."

"Not here," he urged.

"Well, then, there's that other Me down in the pool, watching this Me, and saying, 'Don't make a fool of yourself, honey.'"

She knelt above the water-glass and he bent over to gaze. He saw her looking up at him, and his own image looking up close to hers. They smiled and made faces like children. And when he rubbed his cheek against hers, the images imitated the foolishness.

"See, they're mocking us," she said. A little breeze wrinkled the mirror and she cried: "They're frowning. They want us to be sensible. Come along! They'll be missing us at homé."

"At home?" he echoed reprovingly.

"At Willie's, I mean," she corrected. And then she put his hands away and spoke earnestly. "It came mighty near being home to me. I have a confession to make. I have been amazed at myself for not telling you before, for taking your love when I had no right to."

He stared at her in terror, and she babbled on almost incoherently.

"Don't be afraid—though I'm glad you are. But I hope you wont despise me. But I couldn't seem to help myself—You're really to blame for being so terribly overwhelming. You see, I—I—I've told you how often Willie Enslee proposed to me, and—well—one day—that

very day you saw me in my old hat the first time, you know?—well, I had just had a talk with my father—and the poor old boy was all cut up about his—his money matters—he's too nice and sweet to be much of a financier, you know—and—well, I was scared to death—and I thought the world was coming to an end—and I'd better—better get aboard the ark, you know—and—I hadn't met you then, you know—and Willie proposed again and I—I accepted him."

"You promised to be his wife?" Forbes whispered chokingly.

"Yes," she answered. "I—you see I didn't know you—I didn't dream I should ever meet anybody who would—would thrill me—that's the only word—as you did—as you do. I didn't imagine that I should ever love as other people do—insanely—madly—dishonorably—anything—to be with the one I loved. And I didn't dare tell Willie till I was sure I loved you—and when I was sure I loved you—I—it seemed so hateful even to mention his name. It would have been like—like this." She pushed a rock into the water, and it thumped and splashed and curdled the little pool. "That's the effect his name would have had on our moonlight, and I couldn't tell you then. Will you forgive me, or do you think I'm a hopeless rotter and a sneak?"

He smiled at her mixed vocabulary, and gathered her into his arms: "My love! my Persis! But you'll tell him now, wont you?"

"Oh, now, yes!" she cried, ecstatic as a comforted child. "You are glorious to forgive me so easily, and not be nasty and lecture-y. And see, the pool—it's all smooth and clear again."

He looked, and held back the confession he was about to make in his turn. The mention of his poverty would be pushing another rock into the pool. And he wondered if the pool would clear after that. He could forgive her her betrothal to Enslee because that was of the past; but the lack of money was not a matter for forgiving and forgetting; it was something to endure. It was asking Love to accept Poverty as a concubine—or a mother-in-law.

He kept silent on that score, and they murmured their loves and kissed and laughed, with contentedness purring through their hearts and the world far away. She glanced back at the horses blissfully tearing young leaves from high branches.

"We ought to keep those horses as a souvenir of our engagement. It would be a pity to let anyone else ride the dear old brutes, wouldn't it?"

"It would, indeed!" he said.

"Let's buy them from Willie. He would sell them for a song."

"That's a fine idea," Forbes answered with a gulp. He knew how much horses like these were worth—and saddles, bridles, and stables.

"We shouldn't want to ride in a car all the time, should we?" she asked.

"No, indeed," he answered. She was at her fairy plans again, and his heart sickened.

"We mustn't let ourselves get fat—of all things, we must avoid that," she said. "We might have just a little car like Winifred's—to hold only two. I could drive down and get you and bring you home. It would save wear on our limousine—or perhaps we wont get a limousine just yet. If we didn't have a big car it would be a good excuse for not having a lot of people tagging round with us everywhere, wouldn't it? I feel an awful longing for a lot of solitude with just you and me. I suppose we'll have to put up with the United States army. But I want to shake the gang I've been running with—at least for a year or so, till you and I can get acquainted. Will you buy me a little car like Winifred's—a good one? There's no use wasting money on the cheap kind. The good little ones cost as much as good big ones, but once they're paid for, they don't run up repair bills and they take you where you're going instead of dying under you half way there. Will you buy me a little car for just us? You can get a darling for about thirty-five hundred. I was asking Winifred. If we had a little car it would save taking the big car out, and that saves tires and gasoline and general upkeep—"

He remembered Enslee's words, "It's

the upkeep that costs," and they mocked him again. He realized that in asking this girl to choose him instead of Enslee, who had already chosen her, he was not only robbing her of a yacht, a palace, two or three palaces, half a dozen automobiles, servants, and servants of servants, foreign travel and foreign clothes and jewels—he was not only robbing her of such things, but he was asking her to learn a new way of life, a life of infinite denial, eternal economy, and meager amusement.

Experience and common sense—for he had them in large measure in his ordinary life—seemed to bend down and say: "Let your seagull go. She'll die in your cage, or she'll break away."

But she was in his arms. She was leaning against him, flicking his boots with her riding crop, and loving him, contented utterly. Romance elbowed Reason aside and said: "See how happy she is. It isn't money that makes happiness. You're sitting on the edge of a silly little brook in somebody's backwoods, and you're happy as a king and queen on a throne of gold." But Common Sense grinned: "Suppose it should rain. This is all very well for a while, but what of next winter?"

Reason and Romance wrangled in his head while she was babbling something in her elfin economy about, "So we won't have two cars—yet—just one, a nice big 1913 six, with my chauffeur to run it. Father pays him fifteen hundred a year, and that's good pay; don't you let him wheedle you out of a penny more."

Forbes heart cried aloud within him: "My God! her very chauffeur gets nearly as much as I do." This was the spark of resentment that set him going. He spoke bitterly, almost glad that she was startled and dazed; and he put her away from him that she might be free; and he savagely kicked a rock into the smiling little pool, and watched it grow turbid.

"Listen, honey, you've got a wrong idea of my situation. I'm to blame for it, I reckon. I've been meaning to speak about it but I didn't for just the same reason you kept quiet about Enslee. I'm not rich, honey. I didn't tell anybody I was rich, but the idea got started from

Ten Eyck's fool joke, when he saw me coming out of a big bank. I told him the truth and now I must tell you. You'll hate me, but you've got to know some time. I'm not rich, honey."

"What of it, dear?" she said, creeping toward him. "I love you for yourself. I never thought you were rich like Willie. I gave up all that gladly."

"But I'm what you'd call—a pauper, I suppose. I have only my army pay."

"Isn't that enough?"

"Plenty of couples seem to be happy on it, but they're mostly the sons and daughters of army people. You've been brought up so differently. Wild extravagances for our people would be shabby makeshifts to you."

"Don't you think I'd be able to adapt myself?"

"Would you?"

"I should hope so. How much is your army pay?—if you don't mind my asking you."

"As first lieutenant I get a little over two thousand."

"Two thousand a week? Why that's not bad at all. Why did you frighten me?"

He laughed aloud and she corrected herself:

"Oh, two thousand a month. That's about twenty-five thousand a year. It isn't much, is it? But we could skimp and scrape and we'd have each other."

She had given him his death blow unwittingly.

He smiled as at a funeral and groaned:

"Two thousand a year."

She stared at him in unbelief. "They give you a pittance like that! For being an officer and a gentleman and a hero?"

"The hero business is the worst paid of all. Look at the firemen."

"But, my dear, two thousand a—why, our chef gets more than that—and our chauffeur nearly as much—and my father's secretary—everybody gets more than that."

"Not everybody. The vast majority of people get much less. But that's what I get."

She had been prepared for self-denial, but this was self-obliteration. If he had

told her that he had the yellow fever, she could hardly have felt sorrier for him—or more appalled at the prospect of their union. She loved him perhaps the more for the pity that welled up in her.

She put out her hand and caressed his brow: "Poor boy! it's cruel, it's hateful. Willie Enslee with all that money and you with two thousand a year! And no prospects for more?"

"Well, I hope to be promoted captain very shortly—any day now I should get my commission. That carries with it twenty-four hundred a year."

She sighed: "The little car I wanted would cost more than that. Well, let it go. Walking is healthier. That would save the chauffeur's wages, too. And my maid—I don't know what Nichette would say. But—well, let her go. Let everything go but you."

She clasped her arms around him and he clutched her tight, but his embrace was like a farewell. She was infinitely pathetic to him. She had so much sophistication, and was so innocent of so much. She kissed him tenderly, but her mood was an elegy.

"That knocks out my wedding plans, too, doesn't it? It was the dream of all my life, the ambition of all my girlhood." And she fell to musing aloud. "Many's the night I've lain awake planning that wedding, and that divine wedding gown—all of ivory satin with a train a mile long, and with point lace like whipped cream all over it, and the veil floating in a fleecy cloud about me. And I was to have counts and barons and things for ushers and the belles of the season for bridesmaids—all very envious of me. And the cathedral was to be one ocean of flowers and silk ribbons, and—and I was to have at least an archbishop to marry me. And the presents!—Oh, they were to have been so glorious that everybody that gave them would be bankrupted for life and hate me; and there were to be no duplicates. And the bridegroom was to be, oh, so scared; but oh, oh, so handsome; and so wealthy that all the bridesmaids would loathe me for winning him. And we were to go away in a private car to a palace built brand new just for me."

He was so fascinated with watching her soul in communion with itself that he did not speak. He just held her fast and listened. She went on:

"It was a silly dream. It's not the ceremony that counts—it's the long life after. Love's the main thing, isn't it?"

He lifted her gauntleted hand to his cheek and said nothing. She was silent a long while. Then she pondered aloud again: "I wonder what sort of a poor man's wife I'll make. I'm afraid I'll be an awful failure. You know we were poor once—yes. My father got squeezed in a corner, and nearly went bankrupt. Oh, but Mother and I had to skimp and scrape! I had to turn my old gowns, give up our box at the opera, sell my saddle horse. We couldn't go to dinners or receptions because we couldn't return them. We sat at home and received—indignant creditors. Oh, the bills, the bills—my God, the bills!"

"At the end of a year Father found a man who was unbusinesslike enough to put him on his feet again. It was Willie Enslee, of course. We had money once more; we could hold our heads high, snub those who had snubbed us, get even with those who had patronized us or—ugh—insulted us with their sympathy."

"Oh, money is a great thing, isn't it? It was like coming out of a cave again into the sunlight. I used to say I would face anything rather than poverty again. My mother warned me against loving unwisely. She said that people can do without love easier than without money. She knew me so well."

"And, think of it, Harvey, when we were at our poorest we were spending thirty or forty thousand a year. And we called it poverty. But you and I—two thousand a year!—and forage!"

"Why, Harvey, it would take you a year and a half of work to pay for the little car I wanted—if we did without a big car, and didn't spend a cent on clothes or theatres or the opera or taxies or the seaside or Europe or entertaining people or servants' wages, and—and ate only the forage. We couldn't have a chauffeur. I couldn't have my maid. I couldn't have any friends. —What would



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JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

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I do? I couldn't have anything! Those two horses I wanted would cost a year of your salary. My dressmaker's bills are four or five times as much and I never have anything to wear at that. Why, Harvey, it's frightful! I never knew what money meant before: I don't see how we could ever manage it! I don't see how!"

She had seen poverty and its wreckage and her mind was filled with pictures, not from the charming homes of moderate means, but from the slums that she had visited once and avoided thereafter as a nightmare. She had had friends who had gone into bankruptcy and slunk off into obscurity to hide its penalties.

To everyone, his or her especial cowardice. Persis, so brave in so many ways, was afraid of creepy things like caterpillars and creditors and poverty. They spoiled for her everything that they touched, flower or ceremony or future.

She was silent a long while, and Forbes set his arms about her, but she did not respond: her hands were idly rolling her riding crop up and down the shin of her boot, for she was thinking hard.

Forbes felt that he clung to the mere shell of her soul. Herself was already gone from him. Yet he loved her so that he found her not unworthy or selfish or craven, but infinitely precious and difficult to win and wear.

A great many shining throngs of water went down the brook, making all the conversation there was, before Persis began to flog her boots with her riding-crop. She wanted to groan, but as was her custom in torment, smiled instead; and, having something of tragic solemnity to utter, put it forth with a plucky flippancy:

"Well, old boy, I'm afraid all bets are off."

XXXV

Forbes had been recruiting strength to tell her that he released her, but she anticipated him by jilting him first—and in sporting terms. He stared at her, but he could not see the tears raining down in her heart. He heard her, but was deaf to

the immense regret in the little words she added:

"You're pretty poor, aren't you?"

His very forehead was drenched with red shame at such comment from her. She could see how she had hurt his pride and she put on the solemnity he expected her to wear.

"Oh, don't misunderstand me, Harvey, I implore you! I love you all the more for being just your glorious self. You've paid me the greatest honor I ever had—or shall have. You asked me to be your wife and you are willing to divvy up your pitiful little income with me. You'd give it all to me. You'd run into debt till you smothered. But it wouldn't work out. Mother was right: 'People can do without love easier than without money.'"

"Not people with hearts like yours," he ventured at last to put in as a feeble objection.

"Oh, I'm afraid of this heart of mine," she answered. "If it had any sense it wouldn't have fallen in love with you—you of all men. I knew you weren't really terribly rich, but I didn't think you were so cruelly poor."

The epithet reiterated stung him like a whip in the face. He protested impatiently:

"I'm not really poor. Army officers have many ways of saving expenses. I might not give you princely luxuries, Persis, but I'd make your life happy."

His resistance gave her something to fight, and her resentment at fate welcomed it: "Me happy at an army post? With nothing but poker for you and gossip for me? No, thank you!"

She caught a twitch of anger in his brows and she grew harsher:

"Look here, would you give up your career for me?"

"A woman can't ask a man to give up his career," he answered, and she retorted with the spirit of her time:

"Then why should she give up hers for him?"

He looked an old-fashioned surprise. "And have you a career?"

"Of course I have. Every woman has, and nowadays a woman has got to look out for herself and her future, or she'll get left at the post."

"And what career have you?" he asked, amazed.

"Marriage. It's the average woman's main business in life, Harvey. If she fails in that, she fails in everything."

"Then you think a woman ought never to marry poor?"

"Oh, no; I'm not such a fool as that. There are people with simple tastes who can be happy on nothing a year: sweet, domestic women who love to manage and cook and sweep and mend and sew. There are lots of unhappy rich women who would be thoroughly contented if they were the wives of laboring men. But that doesn't happen to be my type. I can't help it. I grow positively sick at the sight of a needle. Even fancy stitching hurts my eyes. And I can't help that. There are lots of poor women who are making their homes hells because they have no money. They'd be angels if they didn't have to economize. Some people, rich and poor, take a sensuous delight in watching a bank-account grow and they get more thrill out of saving a penny than out of getting something more beautiful for it.

"But I'm not one of those. I'm a squanderer by nature. I hate to be denied things. I loathe counting the cost of things. I can't endure to see some one else wearing better things than I've got on. I want to throttle a woman who has a later hat than mine. Oh, I may be a bad one, Harvey. But it isn't my fault. I am what I was born to be. I've got to marry money, Harvey. I've just got to."

He cried out against her self-portrait as a libel: "Oh, Persis, don't tell me that you are mercenary—a woman with a big heart like yours!"

"I'm not mercenary exactly; I loathe money as money, but I like nice things. I have to have them. I'm trying to be honest with myself and with you—in

time—before it's too late. It's hard, but I didn't arrange the world, did I? I didn't choose my own soul, did I? But I've got to get along with what was given me—haven't I? I tell you, I'd ruin your life, Harvey. You'd divorce me in a year."

"Don't talk like that! Or you will ruin your own life. There's a big tragedy in store for you, Persis, unless you—"

"Well, so long as it isn't the tragedy of being unable to pay my bills, and of eating my own cooking, I can stand it. I'd rather be unhappy than shabby. But it's growing late; we must get back."

He aided her to her feet, untied the horses, and offered her his hand for a mounting block. But she said:

"We can walk quicker here than we can ride." Taking her bridle in her arm she set out swiftly. She seemed once more to be running away from something—a shadow of poverty, no doubt. He felt unspeakably sorry for her.

As they issued from the green cave of the forest and walked down to the State road to take the saddle, a motor came along. Two men were in it. The driver stopped the car in front of Persis, and the other man lifted his hat. It disclosed a shock of brindle hair and half of one eyebrow gone.

"Can you tell me if this road leads to Briarcliff?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so," Persis answered.

"Thank you—Miss Cabot," he called out as the car whirled away.

Persis stared after him in amazement. "Now who was that? How did he know my name?"

"By your pictures in the papers?" Forbes suggested.

"No," said Persis. "I've met him somewhere. Oh, I know. He's a reporter on the—some paper. Lord, I hope he didn't misconstrue our being here. I didn't like the grin on his face."

The next installment of "What Will People Say?" will be in the January Red Book, on all news-stands December 23rd.



"F A G"

By JAMES OPPENHEIM

Author of "Dr. Rast," etc.

Illustrated by Dan Sayre Groesbeck

FAG, shadowed by a guard, slouched into the under-jailer's room. Fag felt strange in his street-clothes, the thin, threadbare overcoat, the baggy trousers, the old scarf round his neck; but he looked stranger than he felt, for his close-shaved head was as white and flabby as fresh dough, stuck with two winking brown eyes.

The under-jailer, a pale, thin, bearded wisp of a man, looked up from his bulb-lit desk. Fag leaned toward him through the shadows, a white face; and nearly lost in the outer darkness, the face of the guard was a mere suggestion. The room was very still.

"Here's your money, Fag. Count it."

The voice had a plaintive, irritable quality. Fag whispered huskily:

"Thanks, Mr. Mooney."

His hands trembled as he counted.

"One thirty-seven," he muttered, "aint such a fortune."

In the silence Mr. Mooney rocked squeakingly in the revolving chair.

"'Night," said Fag.

"Wait a bit." Mr. Mooney spoke irritably. "Just sit down, Fag. I've a word to say to you."

Fag sat down gingerly, at the very edge of the chair, his cap held between his knees, and his winking eyes, watching the under-jailer, showed fear and suspicion.

Mr. Mooney leaned toward him, one finger on the desk.

"Take a tip from me, Fag, and clear out of Pittsburgh—*to-night!*"

"I aint done nothing," whined Fag.

"That's a good one." Mr. Mooney laughed harshly. "Hear that, Marty? He aint been let out yet, and he says he aint done nothing."

The guard echoed his laugh in the dark.

"Fag," said the under-jailer, "I know you. You've been in this here jail three times. For what? Stealin' off children and women; gettin' drunk. Now I'm givin' you a friendly tip. Beat it. This town's gettin' too small to hold you." He tapped the desk with his stiffened forefinger. "For if you're caught here again we'll make it worth while—so you take a friendly tip, and skip."

"Ahr—" muttered Fag.

Mr. Mooney broke in roughly.

"I aint got any use for your kind. Don't give me any reform story. There's nothing in it. You'll go out to-morrow and steal some school-kid's carfare—that's you, Fag, and your kind. Why, you aint worth jailin'; a kennel's too good for you."

Fag played with his cap.

"Don't I try to get work?" he whined. "I aint so strong."

"Never worked in your life," said Mr. Mooney.

"Sure I worked," muttered Fag. "Went to work when I was eight years old—worked in a coal-breaker, leanin' over, catchin' the coal coming down the chute, sortin' it out of the slate. There was a cloud of coal-dust so thick you couldn't see three foot, and the leanin' and the dust and the sharp lookin'—learned me how to drink. I aint been fit to work since." He whined again, "I aint strong, Mr. Mooney."

Mr. Mooney rose sharply and hit the desk with his fist.

"Tell that to your grandmother. Fag, you aint good enough to work and you aint bad enough to sin. You aint got any guts. That's what's the matter with you."

He leaned over.

"There's four-fingered Jim. *He'd* risk his life blowing up a safe; *he'd* kill a man, he would. There's stuff to Jim—there's hope for Jim. Give him a chance and he'll make good. But you? You're weak as water. You'll never change all your life—but always go whinin', snivelin', sneakin'—you're a mut, a yeller dog, and there's thousands like you. Don't tell me!"

He leaned closer, calmly shook his fist in Fag's face, and spoke in low, measured tones.

"Fag, you aint got a soul. You were born without a soul. God wasn't on hand when your mother labored, and you slipped into the world without a soul. For if you had a soul you'd go out of this here jail and be good—or *bad*.

You'd get to work, or you'd go and do something splendid sinful and justify your eternal soul." He laughed shortly. "You aint even got feelings. What are you, anyway? A monkey?"

"I aint strong," muttered Fag.

Mr. Mooney sighed despairingly and looked up at the guard.

"What's the use, Marty? Eh? I'm one fool to get excited over rubbish." He spoke more pleasantly. "Well, get along, Fag—s'long. We'll shortly meet again. Good-night, old boy."

Fag rose.

"'Night, Mr. Mooney."

Mr. Mooney sat down.

"Just have a mite



"You'd better come, Bea."

of sense and leave Pittsburgh. That's all I say. S'long."

He bent to his work, and Fag shuffled out.

The somber streets were gray and black with the shadows of lonely lamps, and a whistling wind carried stinging grains of snow. Fag was almost sorry to be out; he hankered wistfully for the warm cot in the jail and the assurance of breakfast. Wrapped close in his coat, his cap drawn over his eyes, his hands in his pockets, and feeling very shaky and strange, he cut through the sharp snow, the wind and the darkness, shivering in the cruel cold.

He made straight for the water-side, turning down blind and squalid streets, more lonely in their lamp-spotted silence than the heart of a wilderness.

Windows and doors shut in the sleepers, shut out the wanderers, and the pave and gutter were empty of all life. Here and there the glow of a saloon through its misted windows called to Fag as he shivered past. Yet he bore on stolidly, a miserable stray creature in the night.

He came to a long, high bridge that spanned the Monongahela, and started over. He bent nearly double in the increasing wind and the fierce gusts of brittle snow. On and on he went alone on that high-held pathway, save that like a startled rat a lonesome trolley-car scurried past and whizzed itself out of sight. The wind sang among the bridge-cables; the pathway trembled, and the



"Fag, you aint got a soul. You were born without a soul."

far river was lost in the black gulf beneath.

But Fag, glancing afar, saw up the far shore the black pipes of a steel mill, and among those pipes a great vomit of golden fire that shrank, that swelled, that burst upward with a wild snow of flame-flakes, that died again until the pipes and the roof-sheds were lost in blackness. And over the fires a cloud of smoke rolled into and out of a shudder of red, and under the fires the dimpled sheet of river repeated the glorious gold, and bore for a moment the black, smoke-plumed silhouette of a tug-boat.

His eyes never leaving those hot fires, which by their distance made him only

the colder, *Fag* speeded up his pace. A woman, a mere blowing rag, emerged from the darkness ahead, gave him the width of the path, and almost ran by him. The night and the wind swallowed her. He had half a mind to turn back; he whimpered miserably; he whined against the harsh, gigantic world that had given him birth and now was torturing him. How little he knew or cared of where he was! Child of untold eternities of the clash and labor of natural forces—product of the Mills of the Skies, the terrific stars beating out in their flames the red-hot planets and casting them forth to cool in the circling plunge through the abyss—latest creation of the millions of ages of an Earth working off on her surface a breed of animals that grew into a breed of men—fruit of the rising civilizations—*Fag*, crossing a man-made bridge over the Monongahela, knew only that he was cold, hungry, lonesome, and not even that he was a nearly naked creature whom all the forces of the past and the overwhelming powers of the present were cruelly torturing.

There seemed surely no reason for his dim existence. A poor product, this, of such cataclysmic preparations! A poor thing, this, for Mother Earth to offer up to the suns that bore her—this shivering shape that fled over her dark and snow-stung cheek....

But he did get over the bridge, and shot at once into a monstrous black tangle of lost streets. The gutters were rough nests of cobble-stones; the squat brick houses were leering dwarfs in the meager stain of the gas-lamp. He turned sharp corners; his feet slipped over dislocated paving stones; and deeper and deeper he threaded his way into a Deserted City. The snow had ceased; the wind dropped; he could hear his own footsteps echo between the low walls.... Now and then above the housetops, marking their skyline studded with short chimneys, a great flare went up the sky.

He was working toward that flare, and all at once he came out on a curving street that ran straight to the mill.... Above the mill's side that roaring fire rolled into the sky, beautiful manes of

flame, up-breaking billows, blinding to behold, crowned with a showering gold-dust and palpitating clouds, and down the red-brick street a lightning flashed and fled.

Every other moment the two-storied walls, the gutter, the wooden stoops, the pump on the curb, leaped out of darkness into a dramatic vividness, showing every brick, the fringe of a shade, the pattern of a dirty lace curtain.... *Fag*, wading through this changing splendor, turned small and dim or was struck off large and lit with a black shadow sprawling behind him.... There was a sense of a city on fire, a city left to burn by itself, where all the inhabitants had fled. It seemed as if soon this street with its squalid, squat tenements would be consumed in flame.... And save for the far roar of the fire and the muffled rumble of the mill, what silence—stone-dead, still as mid-ocean—a red hush....

Fag paused before one of these little houses. A few wooden steps climbed to the shut door, and the lower and upper windows had their yellow blinds drawn down. *Fag* hesitated. Then with numb fingers he picked up a handful of dirt and flung it at an upper window. It struck the pane like a sharp hail, and recoiled, dropping to the sill and to the street. *Fag* waited. Then he flung another handful....

The shade was pushed aside and a woman in her night-gown leaned like a white shadow against the pane. *Fag* nodded. The woman disappeared. *Fag* waited; he was beginning to feel fear—he wanted to hide from these fires; he gave sidelong looks to see if anyone was out....

Suddenly, with a little noise the shade went up, and up went the window. The woman, in a rough green bath-robe, leaned out. Her loose black hair fell over her shoulders, hanging straight down; and her face, half-hidden, showed a thin, sharp nose and quiet, lusterless gray eyes.... but where the flare of the fire went over her, there was a startling beauty about her, as of some forgotten woman in a medieval tower....

She spoke quietly, and yet emphasis went into the words.

"So you're out, Fag."

"I'm out," he muttered.

"Why'd you come here?"

"For you."

She did not answer for a moment. Then her voice was lower.

"Why should I go with you?"

"You'd better come," he said doggedly.

"But what's the use?"

"You'd better come."

"In a week," she went on, "you'll be locked up again."

"You'd better come, Bess."

"Besides, I aint goin' to feed you and shelter you," she continued. "It's hard enough to keep myself goin'."

"You'd better come."

She looked at the shivering man, and shivered herself.

"You're cold, aint you?" she said.

"Cruel cold," he muttered.

"Got any money?"

"Dollar thirty-seven."

"Are you hungry, Fag?"

"Hungry and—thirsty."

"Aw, but you've just had a bite somewhere."

"No, I aint, Bess. I come for you."

"G'wan!"

"I come for you, Bess. I got the money in my pocket; I'll show you."

"Come straight here?"

"Over the bridge."

"And aint et anything?"

"Aint had a bite—or a drop."

She looked at him softly.

"Mame's dead," she murmured.

"What'd she die of?"

"Throw'd herself in the river—fool!"

"Out of money?"

"No—Jakey left her. Aint it strange?"

"Then you're all alone," he said.

"All alone," she murmured. "I wonder if ever I'll throw myself in the river." She laughed softly. "But never for a man, never for a man!"

"You'd better come along, Bess."

"And marry you?"

"If you want to. Why not?"

"So as I'll have to support you? It's hard enough to keep myself, without feedin' a man."

He almost whined.

"You'd better come, Bess."

"Fag," she said, leaning out a little

farther, "what are you, anyway? You aint a man, you know.... Why, there's nothing to you. You loaf and drink and steal and you get the trembles like a girl.... You don't suppose I love a little thing like you?"

"I aint strong."

She laughed softly.

"And you've the nerve to come for me—you want to marry me on a dollar thirty-seven. Well, there's that to your credit: You've got nerve, anyway."

He shivered.

"Aint it cold, Bess?"

She spoke softly again.

"I aint been well lately, Fag. Do you care?"

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, everything.... It's lonesome without Mame. I aint a friend in the world."

"I'm your friend," said Fag.

She laughed softly.

"You! You—little mouse! And what are you! A nice friend! I suppose," she went on musingly, "if I married you, you'd even be beating me, and you'd run off before long."

"Aint never struck a woman," Fag said.

"Then mebbe," she laughed gently, "I'll be beating you. You aint strong, you know, Fag." A touch of passion came into her voice. "You worked when you was a child, same as I, and so you aint had a chance. You and me—well, we're down-and-outs, we're slag, we're mud. I aint a friend in the world, Fag, now Mame is gone."

"I'm your friend, Bess."

"How'd they treat you in the jail?"

"Same as always."

"Grub good?"

"Middlin'—sometimes."

"I suppose you'd like to get your teeth in a juicy steak and feel some cold beer in your throat?"

"I'm *that* hungry!"

She spoke with very tender softness.

"You poor thing!—Are your shoes broken?"

"Look."

He showed her the tattered things, and she shook her head.

"You can't wear *them*. And that

overcoat! Where did you want to take me?"

"Over to Hobson's. He'll git us some one to marry us, and give us credit too."

"I've got seven dollars."

He looked up eagerly.

"Sure?"

"Sure."

"Then you aint goin' to keep me waiting, Bess?" he whimpered.

"There now!" she cried. "That's it." She spoke a little bitterly. "Didn't I know all along you thought me a good thing. You aint anyone else to go to. So you come to me—for my money, not for me. You want some one to take care

of you. And you think I'm a fool like the rest—like Mame. Love—love—" she muttered sadly. "You, Fag, you can't love. No men can; it's us women that do the loving."

"You'd better come," he murmured.

She looked at him quietly.

"No, I'm not coming, Fag."

"You'd better."

"I'm not coming."

Silently they looked at each other, the flare of the fires dusting down the street—a man and a woman alone in a deserted world.

"Bess!" he cried wistfully.

"Ah, Fag," she said, "what do you want of me? Aint I had enough troubles? If you were only a man, now!"

"Bess! Bess! Come on!" he cried.

"Ah, can't you leave me alone?"

Her voice broke.

"Why do you make me have pity on you? Don't talk no more, Fag. I aint coming."

"I come for you!"

"You aint any right to."

"You got to come."

"Why? Tell me why, now?"

"We—you and—I—want you," he paused, tangled in his expression.

"But I aint coming. That's final."

"You send me off now, Bess?"

"It's your own doing."

"Ah, Bess!"

"Must you call me like a child?" she cried out. "Now, get along!"

And suddenly she drew in, slammed



"I suppose," she said with terrible eagerness, "you need me."

down the window, pulled down the shade.

Tears ran down his face; he glanced up; he looked down the yellow-flaring street; he stooped and flung dirt on the window. . . . He waited; then he whistled. In the silence, then, and lighted by the fires, he shrank into the miserable thing he was—the unloved of Earth, the unwanted, the undesired, the waste of the world. Not even this woman wanted him. No living thing of all the living world had use for him.

In a vast creation where star is attracted to star, where mighty power draws the earth to the sun, where atom cleaves to atom, and everything that moves and breathes is pulled by love, and where human beings rise on their little planet and give themselves gloriously to each other, this creature seemed a mistake, an outcast, the despised of all. Not knowing all this, yet he felt it. He felt that he had nowhere to lay his head. . . . Slowly he started down the street, his hands in his pocket. He would go to Hobson's and risk being thrown out in the street. . . .

He was cold and hungry; he shivered. It hardly seemed possible that once he had been the baby of a woman that loved him passionately. That loved baby had evolved into this. . . .

Half-way down the dark street suddenly a light hand touched his arm. . . . He wheeled, as if trapped, and then gave a low sob. It was Bess, in her street-clothes, a heavy shawl over her head and round her shoulders.

"Fag."

"Yes."

"You come straight from the jail to my house?"

"I did."

"And being hungry, you not so much

as stopped for a bite or a drink?"

"Aint I said so?"

"You said you had a dollar thirty-seven. Show me."

With numb hands he drew out the money and slouched over to a street-lamp. She counted it eagerly, and handed it back.

"Why did you come straight?"

"For you," he mumbled.

"I suppose," she said with terrible eagerness, "you need me."

"Bess!"

"Some one's got to take care of the likes of you. You aint a soul in the world to look after you."

"You'd better come, Bess."

She flung her arms around him and kissed him.

"I'm a fool, Fag, I'm a fool—wors'n Mame. But you come straight from the jail, didn't you? And you aint anything but a child—and I can't stand a child calling me!"

Fag was crying.

"Ah, Bess—ah, there, Bess!"

She wiped her shawl over her eyes.

"Fag, my poor Fag! The world aint got any place for you, so I—I must make a place for you!"

And as she kissed him again, her heart mixed with woman-love and mother-passion, the uttermost outcast of earth was touched, through her, with the great glory, the immeasurable loveliness of the world. . . . Through each other, unknown to their minds but not to their hearts, these two exiles, these two mistakes of the earth, weak, useless, rubbishy, were drawn up into the highest and the noblest, into that which is winged among the troubled worlds. . . . and by the love they gave each other they had become a part of the heart of Nature.

*The FINAL STORY of
KAZAN and GRAY WOLF*



The End of the Trail

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

Author of "Isobel," "Flower of the North," etc.

Illustrated by Frank B. Hoffman

KAZAN, the quarter-strain wolf dog, lay at the end of a fine steel chain, watching little Professor McGill mixing a pail of tallow and bran. A dozen yards from him lay a big Dane, his huge jaws drooling in anticipation of the unusual feast which McGill was preparing. The Dane showed signs of pleasure when McGill approached him with a quart of the mixture, and as he gulped it down the little man with the cold blue eyes and the gray-blond hair stroked his back without fear. But his attitude was different when he turned to Kazan. His movements were filled with caution, and

yet his eyes and his lips were smiling, and he gave the wolf-dog no evidence of his fear, if it could be called fear.

The little professor was up in the north country for the Smithsonian Institute and had spent a third of his life among dogs. He loved them, and understood them. He had written a number of magazine articles on dog intellect which had attracted wide attention among naturalists. It was largely because he loved dogs, and understood them more than most men, that he had bought Kazan and the big Dane on a night when Sandy McTrigger and his partner had tried to get them to fight to the

death in a Red Gold City saloon. The refusal of the two splendid beasts to kill each other for the pleasure of the three hundred men who had assembled to witness the fight delighted the Professor. He had already planned a paper on the incident.

Sandy had told McGill the story of Kazan's capture, and of his wild mate, Gray Wolf, and the Professor had asked him a thousand questions. But each day Kazan puzzled him more. No amount of kindness on his part could bring a responsive gleam in Kazan's eyes. Not once did Kazan signify a willingness to become friends. And yet he did not snarl at McGill, or snap at his hands when they came within reach. Quite frequently Sandy McTrigger came over to the little cabin where McGill was staying, and three times Kazan leaped at the end of his chain to get at him, and the wolf-dog's white fangs gleamed as long as Sandy was in sight. Alone with McGill he became quiet.

Something told Kazan that McGill had come as a friend that night when he and the big Dane stood shoulder to shoulder in the cage that had been built for a slaughter pen. Away down in his brute heart he held McGill apart from other men. He had no desire to harm him. He tolerated him, but showed none of the growing affection of the huge Dane. It was this fact that puzzled McGill. He had never before known a dog that he could not make love him.

To-day he placed the tallow and bran before Kazan, and the smile in his face gave way to a look of perplexity. Kazan's lips had drawn suddenly back. A fierce snarl rolled deep in his throat. The hair along his spine stood up. His muscles twitched. Instinctively the Professor turned. Sandy McTrigger had come up quietly behind him. His brutal face wore a grin as he looked at Kazan.

"It's a fool job—tryin' to make friends with *him*," he said. Then he added, with a sudden interested gleam in his eyes, "When you startin'?"

"With the first frost,"

replied McGill. "It ought to come soon. I'm going to join Sergeant Conroy and his party at Fond du Lac by the first of October."

"And you're going up to Fond du Lac—alone?" queried Sandy. "Why don't you take a man?"

The little professor laughed softly.

"Why?" he asked. "I've been through the Athabasca waterways a dozen times, and know the trail as well as I know Broadway. Besides, I like to be alone. And the work isn't too hard, with the currents all flowing to the north and east."

Sandy was looking at the Dane, with his back to McGill. An exultant gleam shot for an instant into his eyes.

"You're taking the dogs?"

"Yes."

Sandy lighted his pipe, and spoke like one strangely curious.

"Must cost a heap to take these trips o' yours, don't it?"

"My last cost about seven thousand dollars. This will cost five," said McGill.

"Gawd!" breathed Sandy. "An' you carry all that along with you! Aint you afraid—something might happen—"

The little professor was looking the other way now. The carelessness in his face and manner changed. His blue eyes grew a shade darker. A hard smile which Sandy did not see hovered about his lips for an instant. Then he turned, laughing.

"I'm a very light sleeper," he said. "A footstep at night rouses me. Even a man's breathing awakens me, when I make up my mind that I must be on guard. And, besides,"—he drew from his pocket a blue-steel automatic pistol,—"*I know how to use this.*" He pointed to a knot in the wall of the cabin. "Observe," he said. Five times he fired, at twenty paces, and when Sandy went up to look at the knot he gave a gasp. There was one jagged hole where the knot had been.

"Pretty good," he grinned. "Most men couldn't do better'n that with a rifle."



When Sandy left, McGill followed him with a suspicious gleam in his eyes, and a curious smile on his lips. Then he turned to Kazan.

"Guess you've got him figured out about right, old man," he laughed softly. "I don't blame you very much for wanting to get him by the throat. Perhaps—"

He shoved his hands deep in his pockets, and went into the cabin. Kazan dropped his head between his paws, and lay still, with wide-open eyes. It was early in September, and each night brought now the first chill breaths of autumn. Kazan watched the last glow of the sun as it faded out of the southern skies. Darkness always followed swiftly after that, and with darkness came more fiercely his wild longing for freedom. For Kazan was remembering.

Ever since that terrible day when the brute prospector, Sandy McTrigger, had first beaten him sick and then chained him in the wake of his canoe till every splendid muscle in his bruised body seemed bursting with pain and he was choked with water, Kazan had never for one minute ceased to remember and hate and mourn. He hated Sandy McTrigger with all the hatred of a dog and a wolf, and he mourned for his blind mate, Gray Wolf, with as much intensity as he hated. But with all the longing and sorrow in him he could not know how much more awful their separation was for his faithful mate.

Never had the terror and loneliness of blindness fallen upon Gray Wolf as in the days that followed Kazan's capture. For hours after the shot, she had crouched in the bush back from the river, waiting for him to come to her. She had faith that he would come, as he had come a thousand times before, and she lay close on her belly, sniffing the air, and whining when it brought no scent of her mate. Day and night were alike an endless chaos of darkness to her now, but she knew when the sun went down. She sensed the first deepening shadows of evening, and she knew that the stars were out, and that the river lay in moonlight. It was a night



to roam, and after a time she had moved restlessly about in a small circle on the plain, and sent out her first inquiring call for Kazan.

Up from the river came the pungent odor of smoke, and instinctively she knew that it was this smoke, and the nearness of men, that was keeping Kazan from her. But

she went no nearer than that first circle made by her padded feet. Blindness had taught her to wait. Since the day of the battle on the Sun Rock, when the lynx had destroyed her eyes, Kazan had never failed her. Three times she called for him in the early night. Then she made herself a nest under a banskian shrub, and waited until dawn.

Just as she knew when night blotted out the last glow of the sun, so without seeing she knew when day came. Not until she felt the warmth of the sun on her back did her anxiety overcome her caution. Slowly she moved toward the river, sniffing the air, and whining. There was no longer the smell of smoke in the air, and she could not catch the scent of man. She followed her own trail back to the sand bar, and in the fringe of thick bush overhanging the white shore of the stream she stopped and listened.

After a little she scrambled down and went straight to the spot where she and Kazan were drinking when Sandy's shot came. And there her nose struck the sand still wet and thick with Kazan's blood. She sniffed the trail of his body to the edge of the stream, where Sandy had dragged him to the canoe. And then she came upon one of the two clubs that Sandy had used to beat wounded Kazan into submission. It was covered with blood and hair, and all at once Gray Wolf lay back on her haunches and turned her blind face to the sky, and there rose from her throat a cry for Kazan that drifted for miles on the wings of the south wind. Never had Gray Wolf given quite that cry before. It was not the "call" that comes with the moonlit nights, and neither was it the hunt cry, nor the she-wolf's yearning for matehood. It carried with it the

lament of death. And after that one cry Gray Wolf slunk back to the fringe of bush over the river, and lay with her face turned to the stream.

A strange terror fell upon her. She had grown accustomed to darkness, but never before had she been *alone* in that darkness. Always there had been the guardianship of Kazan's presence. She heard the clucking sound of a spruce hen in the bush a few yards away, and now that sound came to her as if from out of another world. A ground-mouse rustled through the grass close to her fore-paws, and she snapped at it—and closed her teeth on a rock. The muscles of her shoulders twitched tremulously, and she shivered as if stricken by intense cold. She was terrified by the darkness that shut out the world from her, and she pawed at her closed eyes, as if she might open them to light.

Early in the afternoon she wandered back on the plain. It was different. It frightened her, and soon she returned to the beach, and snuggled down under the tree where Kazan had lain. She was not so frightened here. The smell of Kazan was strong about her. For an hour she lay motionless, with her head resting on the club clotted with his hair and blood. Night found her still there. And when the moon and the stars came out she crawled back into the pit in the white sand that Kazan's body had made under the tree.

With dawn she went down to the edge of the stream to drink. She could not see that the day was almost as dark as night, and that the gray-black sky was a chaos of slumbering storm. But she could smell the presence of it in the thick air, and could *feel* the forked flashes of lightning that rolled up with the dense pall from the south and west. The distant rumbling of thunder grew louder, and she huddled herself again under the tree. For hours the storm crashed over her, and the rain fell in a deluge. When it had finished, she slunk out from her shelter, like a thing beaten. Vainly she sought for one last scent of



Silently, swiftly—the wolf now, in every movement hated above all others

Kazan. The club was washed clean. Again the sand was white where Kazan's blood had reddened it. Even under the tree there was no sign of him left.

Until now only the terror of being alone in the pit of darkness that enveloped her had oppressed Gray Wolf. With afternoon came hunger. It was this hunger that drew her from the sandbar, and she wandered back into the plain. A dozen times she scented game, and each time it evaded her. Even a ground-mouse that she cornered under a root escaped her fangs.



ment—Kazan came to his feet. Ten feet away stood the enemy he he had ever known.

That night she slept again where Kazan had lain, and three times she called for him without answer. But still through the day that followed, and the day that followed that, blind Gray Wolf clung to the narrow rim of white sand. On the fourth day her hunger reached a point where she gnawed the bark from willow bushes. It was on this day that she made a discovery. She was drinking, when her sensitive nose touched something in the water's edge that was smooth, and bore a faint fleshy odor. It was one of the big northern river clams.

She pawed it ashore, sniffing at the hard shell. Then she crunched it between her teeth. She had never tasted sweeter meat than that which she found inside, and she began hunting for other clams. She found many of them, and ate until she was no longer hungry.

For three days more Gray Wolf remained on the bar. And then, one night the Call came to her. It set her quivering with a strange, new excitement—something that may have been a new hope, and in the moonlight she trotted nervously up and down the shining strip of sand, facing now the north, and now the south, and then the east and the west—her head flung up, listening, as if in the soft wind of the night she was trying to

locate the whispering lure of a wonderful voice. And whatever it was that came to her, came from out of the south and east. Off there—across the barren, far beyond the outer edge of the northern timber line—was *home*. And off there, in her brute way, she reasoned that she must find Kazan.

The Call did not come from their old windfall home in the swamp. It came from beyond that, and in a flashing vision there rose through her blindness a picture of the towering Sun Rock, of the winding trail that led to it, and the

cabin on the plain where the man and the woman and the baby lived. It was there that blindness had come to her. It was there that day had ended, and eternal night had begun. And it was there that she had given birth to her first-born. Nature had registered these things so that they could never be wiped out of her memory.

And to that Call she responded, leaving the river and its food behind her—straight out into the face of darkness and starvation, no longer fearing death or the emptiness of the world she could not see; for ahead of her, two hundred miles away, she could see the Sun Rock, the winding trail, the nest of her first-born between the two big rocks—and *Kazan!*

And sixty miles farther north Kazan, night after night, gnawed at his steel chain. Night after night he had watched the stars, and the moon, and had listened for Gray Wolf's call, while the big Dane lay sleeping. To-night it was colder than usual, and the keen tang of the wind that came fresh from the west stirred him strangely. It set his blood afire with what the Indians call the Frost Hunger. Lethargic summer was gone and the sharp-winded days and nights of hunting were at hand. He wanted to leap out into freedom and run until he was exhausted, with Gray Wolf at his side. He knew that Gray Wolf was off there—where the stars hung low in the clear sky—and that she was waiting.

All that night he was restless—more restless than he had been at any time before. Once, in the far distance, he heard a cry that he thought was the cry of Gray Wolf, and his answer roused McGill from deep sleep. It was dawn, and the little professor dressed himself and came out of the cabin. With satisfaction he noted the exhilarating snap in the air. He wet his fingers and held them above his head, chuckling when he found the wind had swung into the north. He went to Kazan, and talked to him. Among other things he said, "This'll put the black flies to sleep, Kazan. A day or two more of it and we'll start."

Five days later McGill led first the

Dane, and then Kazan, to a packed canoe. Sandy McTrigger saw them off, and Kazan watched for a chance to leap at him. Sandy kept his distance, and McGill watched the two with a thought that set the blood running swiftly behind the mask of his careless smile. They had slipped a mile downstream when he leaned over and laid a fearless hand on Kazan's head. Something in the touch of that hand, and in the Professor's voice, kept Kazan from a desire to snap at him. He tolerated the friendship with expressionless eyes and a motionless body.

"I was beginning to fear I wouldn't have much sleep, old boy," chuckled McGill ambiguously, "but I guess I can take a nap now and then with you along!"

For three days the journey continued without mishap along the shore of Lake Athabasca. On the fourth night McGill pitched his tent in a clump of banskian pine a hundred yards back from the water. All that day the wind had come steadily from behind them, and for at least a half of the day the Professor had been watching Kazan closely. From the west there had now and then come a scent that stirred Kazan uneasily. Since noon he had sniffed that wind. Twice McGill had heard him growling deep in his throat, and once, when the scent had come stronger than usual, he had bared his fangs, and the bristles stood up along his spine.

For an hour after striking camp the Professor did not build a fire, but sat looking up the shore of the lake through his hunting glass. It was dusk when he returned to where he had put up his tent and chained the dogs. For a few moments he stood unobserved, looking at the wolf-dog. Kazan was still uneasy. He lay *facing* the west. McGill made note of this, for the big Dane lay behind Kazan—to the east.

Behind a rock McGill built a very small fire, and prepared supper. After this he went into the tent, and when he came out he carried a blanket under his arm. He chuckled as he stood for a moment over Kazan.

"We're not going to sleep in there to-night, old boy," he said. "I don't like

what you've found in the west wind." He laughed and buried himself in a clump of stunted banksians thirty paces from the tent. Here he rolled himself in his blanket, and went to sleep.

It was a quiet, starlit night, and hours afterward Kazan dropped his nose between his forepaws and drowsed. It was the snap of a twig that roused him. The sound did not awaken the sluggish Dane, but instantly Kazan's head was alert, his keen nostrils sniffing the air. What he had smelled all day was heavy about him now.

Slowly, from out of the banksians behind the tent, there came a figure. It was not that of the Professor. It approached cautiously, with lowered head and hunched shoulders, and the starlight revealed the murderous face of Sandy McTrigger. Kazan crouched low. He laid his head flat between his forepaws. His long fangs gleamed. But he made no sound that betrayed his concealment under a thick banksian shrub. Step by step Sandy approached, and at last he reached the flap of the tent. He did not carry a club or a whip in his hand now. In the place of either of those was the glitter of steel. At the door to the tent he paused, and peered in, his back to Kazan.

Silently, swiftly—the wolf now, in every movement—Kazan came to his feet. He forgot the chain that held him. Ten feet away stood the enemy he hated above all others he had ever known. Every ounce of strength in his splendid body gathered itself for the spring. And then he leaped. This time the chain did not pull him back, almost neck-broken. Age and the elements had weakened the leather collar he had worn since the days of his slavery in the traces, and it gave way with a snap. Sandy turned, and in a second leap Kazan's fangs sank into the flesh of his arm. With a startled cry the man fell, and as they rolled over on the ground the big Dane's deep voice rolled out in thunderous alarm.

In the fall Kazan's hold was broken. In an instant he was on his feet, ready for

another attack. And then the change came. He was *free*. The collar was gone from his neck. The forest, the stars, the whispering wind were all about him. *Here* were men, and off there was—Gray Wolf! His ears dropped, and he turned swiftly, and slipped like a shadow back into the glorious freedom of his world.

A hundred yards away something stopped him for an instant. It was not the big Dane's voice, but the sharp *crack—crack—crack* of the little professor's automatic. And above that sound there rose the voice of Sandy McTrigger in a weird and terrible cry.

II

Mile after mile. Kazan went on. For a time he was oppressed by the shivering note of death that had come to him in Sandy McTrigger's cry, and he slipped through the banksians like a shadow, his ears flattened, his tail trailing, his hind quarters betraying that curious slinking quality of the wolf and dog stealing away from danger. Then he came out upon a plain, and the stillness, the billion stars in the clear vault of the sky, and the keen air that carried with it a breath of the Arctic barrens brought him alert and questing. He faced the direction of the wind. Somewhere off there, far to the south and west, was Gray Wolf. For the first time in many weeks he sat back on his haunches and gave the deep and vibrant call that echoed weirdly for miles about him. Back in the banksians the big Dane heard it, and whined. From over the still body of Sandy McTrigger the little professor looked up with a white, tense face, and listened for a second cry.

But to that first call instinct told Kazan that there would be no answer, and now he struck out swiftly, galloping mile after mile, as a dog follows the trail of its master home. He did not turn back to the lake, nor was his direction toward Red Gold City. As straight as he might have followed a road blazed by the hand of man, he cut across the forty miles of



plain and swamp and forest and rocky ridge that lay between him and the McFarlane. All that night he did not call again for Gray Wolf. With him, reasoning was a process brought about by habit—by precedent, and as Gray Wolf had waited for him many times before, he believed that she would be waiting for him now somewhere near the sandbar.

By dawn he had reached the river, within three miles of the sandbar. Scarcely was the sun up when he stood on the white strip of sand where he and Gray Wolf had come down to drink. Expectantly and confidently he looked about him for Gray Wolf, whining softly and wagging his tail. He began to search for her scent, but rains had washed even her footprints from the clean sand. All that day he searched for her along the river and out on the plain. Again and again he sat back on his haunches and sent out his mating cry to her.

And slowly, as he did these things, nature was working in him that miracle of the wild which the Crees have named the "spirit call." As it had worked in Gray Wolf, so now it stirred the blood of Kazan. With the going of the sun, and the sweeping about him of shadowy night, he turned more and more to the south and east. His whole world was made up of the trails over which he had hunted. That world, in his comprehension of it, ran from the McFarlane in a narrow trail through the forest and over the plains to the little valley from which the beavers had driven them. If Gray Wolf was not here—she was there, and tirelessly he resumed his quest of her.

Not until the stars were fading out of the sky again, and gray day was giving place to night, did exhaustion and hunger stop him. He killed a rabbit, and for hours after he had feasted, he lay close to his kill, and slept. Then he went on.

The fourth night he came to the little valley between the two ridges, and

under the stars, more brilliant now in the chill clearness of the early autumn nights, he followed the creek down into their old swamp home. It was broad day when he reached the edge of the great beaver pond that now completely surrounded the windfall under which Gray Wolf's second-born had come into the world. Broken Tooth and the other beavers had wrought a big change in what had once been his home and Gray Wolf's, and for many minutes Kazan stood silent and motionless at the edge of the pond, sniffing the air heavy with the unpleasant odor of the usurpers.

Until now his spirit had remained unbroken. Footsore, with thinned sides and gaunt head, he circled slowly through the swamp. All that day he searched. And his crest lay flat now, and there was a hunted look in the droop of his shoulders and in the shifting look in his eyes. Gray Wolf was gone. Slowly nature was impinging that fact upon him. She had passed out of his world and out of his life, and he was filled with a loneliness and a grief so great that the forest seemed strange, and the stillness of the wild a thing that now oppressed and frightened him.

Once more the dog in him was mastering the wolf. With Gray Wolf he had possessed the world of freedom. Without her, that world was so big and strange and empty that it appalled him.

That night he slunk under a log. Deep in the night he grieved in his slumber, like a child. And day after day, and night after night, Kazan remained a slinking creature of the big swamp, mourning for the one creature that had brought him out of chaos into light, who had filled his world for him, and who, in going from him, had taken from this world even the things that Gray Wolf had, lost in her blindness.

III

In the golden glow of the autumn sun there one day came up the stream over-



looked by the Sun Rock a man, a woman, and a child. Almost two years had passed since Joan, the girl-wife, had left these regions with her trapper husband for a taste of that distant world which is known as Civilization. All her life, except the years she had passed at a Mission school over at Fort Churchill, she had lived in the forests—a wild flower of nature as truly as the velvety *bakneesh* flowers among the rocks. And civilization had done for her what it had done for many another wild flower transplanted from the depths of the wilderness. She did not look as she did in the days when she was Kazan's mistress, and when the wolf-dog's loyalty was divided between Gray Wolf, on the Sun Rock, and Joan, in the cabin half a mile away. Her cheeks were thin. Her blue eyes had lost their luster. She coughed, and when she coughed the man looked at her with love and fear in his eyes.

But now, slowly, the man had begun to see the transformation, and on the day their canoe pointed up the stream and into the wonderful valley that had been their home before the call of the distant city came to them, he noted the flush gathering once more in her cheeks, the fuller redness of her lips, and the gathering glow of happiness and content in her eyes. He laughed softly as he saw these things, and he blessed the forests.

"You are happy again, Joan," he said joyously. "The doctors were right. You are a part of the forests."

"Yes, I am happy," she whispered, and suddenly there came a little thrill into her voice, and she pointed to a white finger of sand running out into the stream. "Do you remember—years and years ago, it seems—that Kazan left us here? *She* was on the sand over there, calling to him. Do you remember?" There came a little tremble to her mouth. "I wonder—where they—have gone."

The cabin was as they had left it. Only the crimson *bakneesh* had grown up about it, and shrubs and tall grass had sprung up near its walls. Once more it took on life, and day by day the color came deeper into Joan's cheeks, and her voice was filled with its old wild sweetness of song. Joan's husband cleared the

trails over his old trap-lines, and Joan and the little Joan, who romped and talked now, transformed the cabin into *home*. One night the man returned to the cabin late, and when he came in there was a glow of excitement in Joan's blue eyes.

"Did you hear it?" she asked. "Did you hear—the call?"

He nodded, stroking her soft hair.

"I was a mile back in the creek swamp," he said. "I heard it!"

Joan's hands clutched his arms.

"It wasn't Kazan," she said. "I would recognize his voice. But it seemed to me it was like the other—the call that came that morning from the sandbar, his mate's."

The man was thinking. Joan's fingers tightened. She was breathing a little quickly.

"Will you promise me this?" she asked. "Will you promise me that you will never hunt or trap for wolves?"

"I had thought of that," he replied. "I thought of it—after I heard the call. Yes, I will promise."

Joan's arms stole up about his neck.

"We loved Kazan," she whispered. "And you might kill him—or her."

Suddenly she stopped. Both listened. The door was a little ajar, and to them there came again the wailing mate-call of the wolf. Joan ran to the door. Her husband followed. Together they stood silent, and with tense breath Joan pointed over the starlit plain.

"Listen! Listen!" she commanded. "It's her cry, and it came from the Sun Rock!"

She ran out into the night, forgetting that the man was close behind her now, forgetting that little Joan was alone in her bed. And to them, from miles and miles across the plain, there came a wailing cry in answer—a cry that seemed a part of the wind, and that thrilled Joan until her breath broke in a strange sob.

Farther out on the plain she went, and then stopped, with the golden glow of the autumn moon and the stars shimmering in her hair and eyes. It was many minutes before the cry came again, and then it was so near that Joan put her hands to her mouth, and her cry

rang out over the plain as of old:

"Kazan! Kazan! Kazan!"

At the top of the Sun Rock, Gray Wolf—gaunt and thinned by starvation—heard the woman's cry, and the call that was in her throat died away in a whine. And to the north a swiftly moving shadow stopped for a moment, and stood like a thing of rock under the starlight. It was Kazan. A strange fire leaped through his body. Every fiber of his brute understanding was afire with the knowledge that here was *home*. It was here, long ago, that he had lived, and loved, and fought—and all at once the dreams that had grown faded and indistinct in his memory came back to him as real, living things. For, coming to him faintly over the plain, *he heard Joan's voice!*

In the starlight Joan stood, tense and white, when from out of the pale mists of the moon-glow he came to her, cringing on his belly, panting and wind-run, and with a strange whining note in his throat. To Joan, Kazan was more than mere dog. Next to her husband and baby she loved him. There passed through her mind a day when he had saved her and the baby from the wolves—and again the scene of that other day when he had leapt upon the giant husky that was at the throat of the little Joan. . . . As her arms hugged Kazan's great shaggy head up to her, the man heard the whining, gasping joy of the beast.

And then there came once more across the plain Gray Wolf's mate-seeking cry of grief and of loneliness. Swiftly, as



They did not hear again that lonely cry from the Sun Rock.

though struck by a lash, Kazan was on his feet. In another instant he was gone.

"Now do you believe?" cried Joan pantingly. "Now do you believe in the God of my world—the God I have lived with, the God that gives souls to the wild things, the God that—that has brought—us all—together—once more—*home!*"

His arms closed gently about her.

"I believe, my Joan," he whispered.

Afterward they sat in the starlight in front of the cabin. But they did not hear again that lonely cry from the Sun Rock. Joan and her husband understood.

"He'll visit us again to-morrow," the man said at last. "Come, Joan, let us go to bed." Together they entered the cabin.

And that night, side by side, Kazan and Gray Wolf hunted again on the moonlit plain.

Mercenary Dessy

BY IDA M. EVANS

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Illustrated by J. A. Wilson

THERE are many ways of testifying to your love for a woman. You can exchange the contents of your pay envelope for beefsteak and premiums on an insurance policy of such magnitude that she won't have to work after you are cremated. Or you can sidestep the beefsteak and insurance, and plunge heavily in chocolate creams or limousines, according to the bulk of that envelope. You can lie for her or to her; beg for her or from her; join church or leave it; shave your beard or coax one. Or—you can beat her.

It's a wise man who ascertains early in the game what form of testimonial his lady-love prefers.

Bert Cooley came from Iowa, the most rural interior of Iowa, where parties and ice cream sociables cost only a trifle to attend and nothing to leave, where if your father has a decrepit phaeton and a superannuated mare you can shower extravagant attentions on your girl at an expense of some eighty-five cents a month. He had a glimmering idea that it was different in other places. But he had no conception of how different.

Bert was nineteen years old, tall, slim, gray-eyed, so recently from high school that the peroration of his "The Need for

Honesty as the Only Stable Foundation for Real Business Success" still rang in his head. As to his character: His mother declared that the Lord had never before turned out so perfect a specimen, and never would again. Which made Bert red-faced and squirmy, especially when she said it before company as she frequently did. But he tried to live up to it. His father, a quiet-eyed, gentle-voiced man who eked out a pension with a notary's small fees, never said much. But he was always abnormally anxious to stay at home and read the newspaper whenever Bert desired to use the phaeton. His sister Ella, who was five years older than Bert and taught the third grade, said that, as boys go, he wasn't bad.

As to details: Given no other way to get from opportunity-less ruraldom to the city, he would have walked. But his father, mother and sister contributed enough to obviate that necessity. Given his choice between breakfast and a clean collar, Bert would cheerfully have gone breakfastless. Finical, some people might term it. As to his hustling ability: Three hours after he stepped from Union Station into a city whose size, people and street-car system were as absolutely strange to his wide gray eyes as a banana grove to an Eskimo, he had found a landlady who was hospitable but not

trusting; a room, seven by ten, that was clean, but not so clean that it dazzled your optic nerves; a small café around the corner where for twenty cents you could get two-thirds enough supper to satisfy a perky appetite.

Within three days, his name, followed by "\$8.00," was affixed to the payroll of the tallest department store in town. Considering how many boys come every year to storm, bluster, beg, plead or whine at the portals of civic industry, Bert felt that he ought to be satisfied. And he was.

He was stationed at the complaint desk on the main floor. His duties embraced those of errand boy and confidential secretary to the Great Mogul who controlled the adjustment bureau on the nineteenth floor. When damaged, delayed, lost, stolen or strayed goods were reported, it was Bert's task to take down the complainant's name, address and grievance, assure her (in fourteen cases out of fifteen it was a "her") that the matter would be adjusted *immediately*, scurry over to the section where the article was bought, confer with the head of that section as to whether the complainant was a liar, a thief, a grafter, a bluffer, or merely a heckled, abused customer, scurry back and telephone particulars to the seat of power eighteen floors above, and render with courteous coldness, or courteous apologies, or courteous contrition—per orders from above—the decision handed down by the Great Mogul or one of his assistants. As a punching bag for the development of diplomacy, nerves and extemporaneous speaking, the job took first medal.

For three weeks, nearly four, Bert was fearfully engrossed by his work, nostalgia, and the study of economy—which was so different from the placid study of economics in the high school back home that Bert's throat tightened and his stomach widened over the diversity. Back home eight dollars was a large sum—nearly half of his father's pension. In the loop it was smaller. In stretching it over room rent, meals, carfare and "other things," he learned more arithmetic than all his school teachers had taught him. Mostly he eliminated "other things."

Meals assumed an importance that

Bert had never dreamed those commonplace affairs could hold. Back home, meal time came around as a matter of course, was attended to, and then promptly forgotten. Meals were never obtrusive between times. Here they fairly tumbled on one another's heels. You had no more than fished two dimes from that furiously fast-diminishing eight dollars than, lo and behold! it was time to fish again. And the worst of it was that no pesky meal was ever so satisfying that you could eat and forget it. It merely created an itching for another. You dreaded its successor—because of the dimes—but you also found yourself wishing, yearning, aching for it to hurry along.

And laundry! Back home, Bert's mother washed and ironed his shirts, collars and et ceteras. She liked to—so she claimed. They weren't so terribly numerous. Back home you could wear a shirt five days, evenings included, and it was cleaner when tossed to the soiled clothes hamper than the article that, in the city, you took from the just-delivered cardboard protection of the Perfect Purity Laundry Company.

He had just managed to coax and stretch and manipulate the eight dollars into fitting decently if not luxuriously over all that sought shelter under it, when he fell in love—hard. Bert was the kind that falls in love hard, and bruises both heart and head beyond the repairing power of the liniment of time.

Dessy was a "wrapper" in the glove section. She had a last name, but only the timekeeper and the floorman who passed the pay envelopes knew what it was.

Dessy was seventeen—or nearly—and she had plump little white shoulders. She habitually wore the diaphanous waists that least concealed that plump whiteness. Dessy's hair was the lustrous yellow of sunflower petals, and it was naturally curly. Psyches, Madonna partings, pompadours stiff or billowing, figure eights or English buns might swing into style and out. That yellow fluffiness was beyond their helping or marring power. Dessy's eyes were big, brown and bronze-lashed. Many a customer who came to that glove counter would have traded her charge account and all it rep-



Afterward he wished dolefully that he hadn't insisted on taking Dessy in there.

resented for Dessy's hair and eyes—as Dessy, complacent little peacock that she was, guessed.

Dessy defined love: "How much will he spend?" But Bert didn't learn that till later, a bitter later.

As to her particularization of her character: Her step-mother viperishly confided over the garbage cans of the back porch to Mrs. Riley, who lived next door, that the Lord never before made such a lazy, worriting, no-account, good-for-nothing, sassy little hussy, and never would again. Her father, a machinist of depressed eyes and shoulders, said nothing, but he wished privately that she would marry some decent young chap soon. Then he would feel easier.

As to her hustling ability: In the three years and a half since she left grammar school, she had found eleven positions and lost ten; bought two imitation emerald and three turquoise matrix bracelets, nine rings ranging in price from nineteen cents to ninety-nine and set with every color of glass known to bargain jewelry counters, countless silk stockings and suede and satinette pumps; and she knew by heart the menu cards of every café between Wilson Avenue and Sixty-third Street.

Thursday morning of his fourth week, Bert sought Miss Haskins, the thin-visaged, graying-haired head of the glove section, with a pair of elbow-length "chamoisettes" that an aged, rouged, stoutish lady had vowed, "Ripped the very first time I put 'em on! And you can see for yourself, young man, that they're a size and a half larger than I usually wear! No—I don't want another pair. I want my money back. A dollar and thirty-nine cents is what I paid."

"Ripped the first time she put 'em on!" snorted Miss Haskins belligerently. "Say, she's wore 'em three months if she's wore 'em a day! Why, they've even been cleaned! D'ye smell the gasoline? And we haven't had any chamoisettes at that price since last summer. These were *sixty-five* cents. The dodges some folks will put up to make a few crooked pennies! You go straight back and tell her—"

Bert never knew what he should tell the peeved glove-purchaser. Over the

embankment of counter and shelving that separated the precincts of bundle-wrapper and cashier from the public, Dessy smiled. It was a careless smile, born of no especial fancy for the tall, slim, solemn-eyed boy who gaped up at her. Dessy smiled simply because she was in a smiling humor. It was a pleasant day; there had been no friction with the sometimes super-exacting Miss Haskins over duties unperformed or late performed; and the placid present was tintured rosily by anticipation of a "date" that evening with Crilly of the gents' hosiery—who, as Dessy confided boastingly to Mabel, the frizzled-brown-haired director of the cash tubes, was "Some spender, believe me!" To grace the occasion, Dessy would wear a new gown whose heliotrope diaphaneity more than offset—in both Dessy's and Crilly's opinion—a certain textile sleaziness. Over Dessy's lavender-silk-stockingd right leg it was high-slashed. About her knees it was a tight cascade of drape. It V-ed low over neck and shoulders. The sleeves, according to the latest mandate of fashion, crept, rippling-edged, to Dessy's much-gemmed knuckles. It was well worth, in Dessy's mind, the accompaniment of a "good spender."

So she smiled impersonally but with a warm geniality all her own, and returned to the unabsorbing business of inserting white and black silk gloves in narrow manila paper bags.

The smile went straight to the bottom of Bert's heart and upheaved it. He walked away in a daze. The department store faded from his consciousness. As he crossed the first aisle, he saw Dessy back home, sitting beside him in the phaeton. In the next aisle he was introducing her to his mother, who was tearfully but gladly accepting her as a daughter. In the next, she was walking beside him into the Baptist church. A white silk dress—

"Maybe if you'd send a boy who wasn't a gawking numbskull, you'd find out something," the aged, rouged, stoutish lady was saying bitterly to Bert's immediate superior.

After that Thursday, Bert got down to bottom rock in finance. Before, he had

merely practiced economy. From then on, he analyzed it, wallowed in it, plumbed it, acquired deep, dark shadows under his eyes from it. He moved from his fairly clean room to one within walking distance that was far from clean. But he didn't mind—much. Even cleanliness is important only relatively. The next landlady was neither hospitable nor trusting. She demanded the rental before she would allow the handle of a suitcase to pass the doorknob. Bert didn't mind. He was thinking of other things.

By sleeping till noon Sundays, you can cut twenty-one meals to nineteen and a half—the half being a nickel's worth of bananas. In exactly two weeks Bert had arrived at such point of plenitude that he felt justified in asking Dessy to allow him to escort her to a theatre.

Dessy upraised sleek, crayoned eyebrows. Their bronze glossiness needed no crayoning. But some people would pour pigment on the rainbow.

"When?" asked Dessy cautiously. Wise little Dessy knew within a dollar or so what the boys of the complaint desks got in their envelopes.

"To-morrow evening?" Bert said expectantly.

"Why, that's Saturday!" said Dessy, pityingly. "My *Saturday* evenings are *always* dated for at least a *week* ahead! And Sunday—of course—"

"Of course, we couldn't go Sunday evening," Bert readily acknowledged. "But—could you—would you—I'd like awfully well to take you out to Lincoln Park Sunday afternoon."

Dessy's eyes, big, velvety brown, innocent, apparently, as those of a day-old chick, dwelt upon Bert, stammering hopefully, with an expression in their lovely, luminous depths that the boy could no more have deciphered than a day-old chick could decipher the gaudy contents of a billboard. Dessy's "of course" hadn't meant at all what foolish Bert's "of course" had signified. In Dessy's mentality, the only bar to Sunday theatre attendance was lack of a ticket. But her Sunday evenings, like the Saturdays, were preempted long in advance.

As for Lincoln Park! Shades of boredom! "Aint he the nervy rube!" Dessy

indignantly demanded later of Mabel. "Asking me—*me!*—to waste a whole Sunday afternoon out at that cheap, cost-nothing joint, where there aint a thing to look at but sea-lions and grass and not a thing to buy but popcorn and lemonade! The cheek some fellows have got!"

To Bert Dessy said sweetly: "I aint got a date for Monday night, Mr. Cooley."

"Where would you prefer to go?"—rapturously.

"Any place that suits you," said Dessy nicely.

Saturday Bert performed his duties in a rapt manner unsatisfying to complaining customers and complaint-receiving superiors. Sunday Bert went without dinner to have his best trousers pressed. He shined his shoes till they glistened like black glass. He pondered forty-five minutes on the degrees of attraction owned by a cravat that his mother admired—brown, polka-dotted in cream—and a striped fawn and saffron scarf that his sister Ella had given him. His fingers trembled when he put into his best pleated-front shirt the gold links that his mother had given him two years ago the last Christmas.

Vaudeville with Dessy, heliotrope-gowned, beside him, munching chocolates from a fifty-cent box of "Lerribubbel's Best" and giggling soft-throated appreciation of the Novelty Acrobatic Dancers and Lorene, the Silver-Voiced Singer Never Before Heard this Side of Europe, was not vaudeville. It was the seventh inner heaven. Bert had only a hazy notion of what appeared on the stage. He was too engrossed looking at Dessy—and the future. A man—nineteen was Bert, going on twenty—wouldn't mind working, slaving, saving, scrimping, starving—

Bert was naming his second son when the asbestos curtain rolled down the last slow time. After the show—

Did you ever drop a supposed nickel in the church collection basket and discover afterward that it was your only and much-needed five-dollar gold piece? You can't blame the basket, and you know that it's gone for a worthy cause—But how you need it! Pains-takingly,

carefully, safely, had Bert calculated that two tickets at seventy-five cents apiece, one box of candy at fifty cents, several nickels for carfare and two dimes for ice cream sodas could be subtracted from that bi-monthly envelope and enough would be left to enable him to stroll on toward next pay-day with a full pace between him and hunger.

Poor Bert! Dessy's charming little face was as guileless as a papier maché doll's. Dessy's eyes were as placidly unwise as a gay little meadow lark's. Dessy had had a lovely time. She just loved vaudeville—and the place they happened at that moment to be passing was the Ellugunt Café where Crilly—did Bert ever meet Crilly of the gents' hosiery?—*always* stopped after they'd been to a show. The upsweep of Dessy's bronze lashes was like gold dust flecked from brown dewdrops.

Did Bert's feet turn first to the swinging plate glass doors of the Ellugunt Café? Or Dessy's? You'd have to get the information from some one else than Bert. Afterward he wished dolefully that he hadn't insisted on taking Dessy in there. She hadn't really wanted to go—and it was silly of a fellow on a moderate salary to be so extravagant. Next time he'd act differently.

"You ought to have seen the easy way I led him in," giggled Dessy Tuesday morning to Mabel, who jumbled the contents of three cash-carriers in interested listening. "Say, I bet he was raised on grass—he's every bit as green. Honest, Mabel, you'd have died laughing if you'd seen him sitting there, his lips just parted in a stiffish smile, pretending not to care, while I ordered. And I went the limit, believe me! His face got longer—and longer—and bluer—"

"Aint you ashamed?" breathed Mabel, her eyes dancing with mirth.

"Ashamed!" shrilled Dessy. She veered to indignation. "Say, a fellow's got a lot of nerve to ask a girl out unless he wants to blow some coin!"

"I bet he hates you!"

"What do I care?"—pertly. The brown eyes slanted complacently toward a small mirror propped between cash tubes and wrapping paper. "Lots more fish in the sea."

Somehow the complacency piqued Mabel, whom Nature had less alluringly fashioned. "Oh, well," quoth she, high-and-mightily, "I aint exactly in the business of helping fellows fill savings banks, but I'd be ashamed to skin a poor boy out of his meal ticket for two weeks." Righteously Mabel tucked up a stray frizzed wisp of brown hair that had wandered from its marceled moorings.

Dessy was wrapping a pair of silk mitts for an old, white-haired lady waiting patiently below. She laid them down. The melting brown depths of her eyes congealed until each pupil was as stonily cold as a pebble imbedded in winter-frozen earth. With slow and pointed insolence, Dessy's gaze plowed a contemptuous way over Mabel's sallow scrawniness of neck, over Mabel's too thin-chiseled features. "I dare say *you* would," gently admitted Dessy.

Retort requiting sizzled at the tip of Mabel's tongue. But Miss Haskins stretched up, a snapping turtle of rage. "Say, Dessy, do you think a customer has all day to wait for one pair of mitts to be wrapped? If you and Mabel want pink slips in next week's envelopes, just keep on gassing!"

Inside her soft round cheek, Dessy's tongue rolled mutinously. "No matter how hard a girl works,"—reproachfully, "she never gets any credit. There's five packages ahead of those twenty-nine-cent mitts!"

Mabel, however, was mistaken. Bert did not hate Dessy. He blamed only himself for taking her into a place that he could not afford to enter. Dessy, innocent little thing, could not be expected to know how much money a fellow had. And she had not ordered a single thing without first ascertaining that Bert liked it. It was true that his lips had become rather set, and his smile stiffish. And a good-sized lump had come into his throat when he got back to his room and counted the five dimes and two nickels that remained to him.

But as for blaming Dessy! He would sooner have blamed the Novelty Dancing Acrobats.

Fortunately, his room rent was paid in advance for two weeks. His landlady,

according to her careful custom, had been loitering in the hall Saturday when he came in. So he only had to find meals for twelve days out of sixty cents.

You can manage to scrape along a day, or even two, on a five cents allowance. But it is impossible to keep it up for twelve—and work at the same time. Bert pawned his watch and skipped several meals. And Dessy? Dessy smiled sweetly whenever Bert came over to the glove counter. Bert looked at her longingly, without malice, and went on his economical way. He would have liked to call on Dessy. Back home, it was the custom to call on your girl in the long intervals between ice cream sociables and parties. But Dessy put him off—with a "Sometime."

In the next four weeks, Bert fleeced economy, skinned it, dug out its entrails. The circles under his eyes were darker, and he had discovered that doughnuts and coffee are more filling than any other combination at the same price. Dyspepsia be hanged! Bert would have held out welcoming arms to dyspepsia if only it brought loss of appetite in its train.

He had troubles other than dietary, too. Back home, a shirt or a collar could be worn and laundered an indefinite number of times—back home, where there was soft rain water, and your mother

rubbed them gently up and down a washboard, stirred them gently in a boiler of soft suds. And when they wore out, it was a slow, easy-going process. You had plenty of warning before the end came. A collar acquired indolently a delicate, fiberless look. You put it on, and thought to yourself: "That collar won't last more than five or seven more washings." And it didn't. Maybe after the fourth, maybe the sixth, a scattering of roughness appeared at the edge. Before that roughness ever got a chance to de-



velop into a fringe, you tossed the collar away. And your mother said: "Dear me, Bert, you bought those collars only a year ago last January. I'm afraid I rubbed them too hard. I must be more careful."

In the city, you buy a shirt—or collar; both have the same unlovely traits—Saturday night. You wear it Sunday and Monday. Tuesday you send it to the laundry. You get it back the following Saturday, and look at it suspiciously. New? Was *that* ever new? If that laundryman doesn't quit sending you old shirts for new, you'll sue him—or at least you'll tell him. But you don't. What's the use? And the next Saturday you get back something that looks like a grayish, un-antiseptic wash-rag. And the haughty laundryman says: "Say, you cheap, whining guys get my goat! D'ye expect to wear a forty-nine cent shirt *forever*? We don't need your eleven-cents-a-week trade. Go where you're better suited."

You go to several other places where they cauterize linen with potash, lime, lye, sal soda and nitric acid. You are no better suited. And finally you limply and simply submit.

At the end of four weeks, Bert had redeemed his watch. He was taller and slimmer, and far, far older, and he had made up for the attenuated bill of fare of the past by a supper that embraced two orders of veal stew, two of baked beans, raisin pie, rice pudding and combination salad, all at one sitting. His stomach, outraged by the unexpected work after so long a time of slackness, ached all night. Bert didn't care. He almost enjoyed it. The ache of an overfilled stomach is pleasant after the ache of one unfilled.

But after the one appetitful splurge, Bert resumed his whole-souled communion with economy. In two weeks more he had saved enough to take Dessy again to the theatre. In the meantime, he was jealously aware that Crilly of the gents' hosiery, and Shaffer of the neckwear, and Isaacs of the garden utensils, and several others were taking Dessy to shows, cafés, summer gardens, and all the other places that a girl of Dessy's kind likes to be taken.

Bert was jealous, but not surprised. Nor did he feel that he had any right to be jealous. It surprised him that the high moguls who sat in the gold-grilled offices of the nineteenth floor didn't rush down to burn incense before her.

Dessy had almost forgotten Bert. Her bronzed lashes went up in wonder. So—he hadn't been resentful! "Monday evening," she offered.

But Bert was a trifle wiser. "Oh, make it Saturday," he pleaded. "It's awfully lonesome sticking around a room by yourself Saturday evening."

Dessy leaned her elbows on the embankment and considered, round chin palm-pressed, brown eyes smoldering meditatively. For Saturday evening, Dessy had an engagement with Shaffer of the men's neckwear. Shaffer was what you'd designate as a free spender. But he was also a garrulous egotist. Quite often when Dessy desired to talk about herself and her conquests, Shaffer rudely cut in with tales of himself and his conquests. How Emmeline, over in the perfumes, was clean dippy about him. Fudge! Did Dessy want to hear about Emmeline's heart-yearnings? Emmeline, who was so styleless and flat cheek-boned that a water bottle wouldn't be flattered by her, regard!

She remembered that Bert had been neither garrulous nor egotistic. "All right," Dessy conceded with a ravishing smile that recompensed Bert for much travail of economy. "But, say,"—she leaned over the embankment, coaxing in her voice. "Say, Bert!"—Bert's heart throbbed like a motorcycle evading a park policeman,—“let's not go to any stupid vaudeville. Let's hit it straight for a cabaret joint.”

Bert instantly recognized that vaudeville on a stage was stupid; it was much nicer to sit in a café and get it at close range. "I don't care where we go,"—happily and honestly, "as long as you're there."

"Say, boy, do you work in this section?" Miss Haskins unkindly wanted to know. Bert sheepishly edged away, smiling the while with the vacuity of perfect joy.

"Gee!" mouthed Mabel. "He's sure dippy over you!"

"Um-m-m," yawned Dessy in indolent complacency, and glanced toward the small mirror. "I guess he is."

Saturday night, for some reason, Bert's landlady failed to be in the front hall when he bounded in at six-thirty. Unfortunately for her—and for Bert. His mind was too joy-bubbled to hold such a triviality as room rent—profitably for Dessy and some cafés. Bert learned that under some circumstances it costs more to see the cabaret shows which generous restaurateurs furnish without charge than vaudeville, which demands a ticket. But he wasn't embittered. Dessy's gold-brown lashes swept the sharp edge from the lesson.

There followed more weeks of economy, another evening with Dessy, more economy. Bert began to loathe doughnuts, and the next best filler, pork and beans *en casserole*. And about that time Bert began to wonder, sullenly.

"The nerve of him!" indignantly scoffed Dessy to Mabel. "Expecting me to chase around with him when he's broke. He asked me *again* to go out to Lincoln Park Sunday afternoon. Next thing he'll be wanting to take me to the five-cent movies!" Infinite contempt trembled the young clearness of Dessy's voice.

Bert grew slimmer, older. He seemed to grow taller. He looked at Dessy sullenly—and he looked at Dessy longingly. Dessy's brown eyes caught and correctly diagnosed both looks. The bronze lashes fluttered over malicious mirth. And the malice was flecked with scorn.

And then, when his watch and cuff links were represented by a soiled, battered ticket, and his supply of shirts and collars had reached the thirty-third degree of gray-fringed inefficiency, and doughnuts and beans had palled to nauseousness, and life in general was a rasping serration of complaints, loneliness, longing and sullenness—then Bert's mother sent him a crisp, clean ten-dollar bill. "I don't need it at all, dear," she wrote, "and I fancy eight dollars doesn't go very far in a city."

His first impulse was to send it back. Bert knew precisely how his mother—and Ella—could spare that ten dollars. He got an envelope—and hesitated.

Pawn tickets, doughnuts, fraying linen paraded through his mind in dismal sequence. Perhaps—he'd better keep it; for a while. After he once got straightened up, he could save and repay it. He kept it.

That day Dessy passed the complaint desk on her way to the time-clock to punch out for lunch. She stopped. Of late Bert had sullenly avoided the glove section. Dessy's smile, gay, conciliating, made radiant by the darting sheen of bronzed lash and the melting luminosity of brown iris, sought his sullen eyes.

For weeks Bert had been hungry, bitter, lonely. A series of evenings in a dingy, dark, dirty bed-room is not apt to foster hardihood of spirit. Against the radiance of Dessy's smile, sullenness could hold out about as well as a spoonful of cracked ice against a hot July sun.

Dessy crossed her round white forearms on the ledge of the complaint desk outside the iron grille, with a deliberation unnatural at lunch hour, when a time clock ticked each precious minute with rude haste. A pensive sign floated from her parted lips. "To-day," she confided, "is my birthday." The confidence was strangely surcharged with gloom.

Bert forgot that he had even been sullen. "Is it?"—interestedly. "I suppose," he added with palpable jealousy of possible donors, "that you got a stack of presents."

The reason of the gloom was disclosed. "No,"—with sad and pouting candor. "I didn't. Not a thing that I liked."

The frowning imminence of a floor manager who fiercely disapproved of gossiping, visiting, loitering, and other recreations favored by employeeedom, sent Dessy precipitately on her way. Bert crossed his forearms on the ledge of the complaint desk inside the iron grille and cogitated earnestly. Surely, there was nothing serious between Dessy and any of those many other chaps, or they would have remembered her. Maybe he wouldn't need all that ten dollars getting straightened up. When Dessy pouted, she was as winsome as a wind-drooped rose petal. Maybe only eight dollars—or seven. It was a shame that she had been disappointed. Maybe he could

manage on six. That would leave four dollars. What could a fellow get for four dollars? What would a girl like? He wondered—wondered for an hour—two hours—

Four hours later, when the afternoon rush was dwindling to the slackness of near-closing time, a small cash boy handed a small box over the embankment of counter and shelving. Not very surprised, Dessy took it. Her lovely eyes sparkled with greedy anticipation. She opened it, pulled forth a small glass vase whose corolla-like mouth held a feathery tracing of gold. The greedy anticipation faded from the big brown eyes. Blatant disgust replaced it.

"Well—will you look at the cheap thing he sent over here to me!" she commanded Mabel. "A glass vase!"

"It's terrible little," said Mabel, "but it's kind of cute."

"Cute?" scorned Dessy bitterly. "I'm glad some one admires it,"—witheringly. "Here, take it—keep it. I'll make you a present of it." She tossed it over with purposely reckless aim. Mabel failed to catch it. The Bohemian frailty struck the metal cash tube and crashed into fragments.

"Oh!" cried Mabel in dismay.

"Small loss," Dessy declared coolly, giggled—and looked down to discover Bert's white, angry face. Mabel's eyes followed Dessy's.

"Oh!" Mabel re-iterated in deeper dismay.

"Sorry, but I broke your present," said Dessy airily. The accent that she put on the last word was cruelly belittling.

Bert gazed up at her insouciant eyes for a long, tense minute.

"My!" laughed Dessy. "You look as though you would like to slap me!"

Bert was only nineteen. He flushed. "So I would," he agreed tersely, and walked away.

Mabel, open-mouthed, open-eared, open-eyed, picked up a gold-traced fragment and examined it inquisitively. Then she asked Miss Haskins for a five-minute pass, and scooted in the direction of the imported glassware section. When she returned, her eyes glittered—and her breath was short to suffocation.

"Dessy!" she hissed. "How much would you guess he paid for that teenty-weeny glass vase?"

"Don't know," snapped Dessy. Her eyes were as empty of laughter as a drouth-dried brook bed. "Quarter?"

"Nine dollars and seventy-five cents!"

A week went by. Another—another. Bert attended to his duties with such assiduity that the High Mogul on the nineteenth floor kindly assured him that his salary would be raised very soon. In a year, maybe. Bert thanked him with sober unelation. Bert's eyes, voice and mien had come to be very sober, whether he talked to complaining customers, section heads or High Moguls. And when business called him over to the glove department, his glance never went so high as the embankment of counter and shelving.

"And I don't blame him!" quoth Mabel high-and-mightily.

Dessy's brown eyes snapped. Of late Dessy had been most unaccountably irritable. "What do I care?" she demanded crossly. "There's plenty more fish. Lots."

"Sure!" Mabel hastened to assent. Dessy cross was something to be placated quickly, if the day would be pleasant. "And he wasn't much of a catch. Sort of foolish. I'd think a fellow was an awful ninny if he paid that much for a present for me!"

Across the cash tubes, Dessy gazed peculiarly at Mabel. "Would you?"—shortly.

"And for him to threaten to slap you! He had a lot of nerve!"

"He—he didn't exactly threaten," Dessy contradicted. "But,"—warmly, "he had a lot of nerve. I'm—I'm awful glad that he understands that I don't care anything about him. I hope he doesn't start to tag after me again."

"I guess he won't be here much longer," Mabel said comfortingly. "I heard him saying something to Crilly about a job out north keeping books in a grocery store."

"Oh—you did?" said Dessy. Some of the peculiarity that had gleamed in her brown eyes seemed to have communicated itself to her voice. "Oh," she repeated slowly, "—you did."



"I've—I've been staying home evenings—for a—a long time."

"Yes. Say, are you going with Crilly to-night—"

"No,"—shortly. She rose and cast off her black apron. "My goodness, it's my time to go to lunch."

"So late?" cried Mabel in surprise. "Why, no, not for ten minutes yet—"

But Dessy, apparently unhearing, clambered down to the aisle, and scooted toward the time-clock. Yet she did not

take, for all her hurry, the shorter way. Instead she chose the more circuitous path which led past the complaint desk.

There she paused. Bert was copying a grievance item anent a decaying silk kimono. He looked up inquiringly. Dessy leisurely leaned her round white elbows on the ledge outside the iron grille, and smiled.

"Hello," she said friendlily. Her smile was as luminous as moonlight, as radiant as sunshine.

"Hello," said Bert soberly.

"Mabel and I never seem to see you any more."

"I'm busy, mostly."

"Oh!" Dessy flat-crossed her bare forearms and surveyed them intently. Then— "Got a date this evening?"

"No,"—gravely. Bert was staring through the iron network at a point about five inches above Dessy's yellow head.

There was a pause.

"Neither have I," said Dessy carelessly.

Another pause. Bert did not offer to break it. In their frame of dark shadows his eyes were nearer black than gray.

"I've—I've been staying home evenings—for a—a long time," said Dessy presently. "It's—sort of monotonous."

More pause. Bert steadily kept the

five inches between his gaze and the yellow fluff.

"But the only fellows that ask me to go any place are fellows—that I don't like," confided Dessy. Her tone was elaborately veneered with carelessness.

More pause. Dessy drew a long breath.

"Don't you get awful lonesome staying in your room evenings?" she gently asked.

"I don't stay in my room evenings," said Bert soberly.

"Oh!" said Dessy queerly. One might almost suspect that a lump in her throat produced that queer note.

"I work evenings," Bert vouchsafed. "Keeping books for a small grocery store near my rooming-house."

"Good gracious!" Deep commiseration quivered in Dessy's voice. It was bad enough to have to work days! But evenings! "How terrible! Do you work Sunday afternoons?"

"No."

Another pause. Dessy's bronze lashes lay low. "I—I haven't got a date for Sunday afternoon," she said softly.

Bert said nothing. Merely stared out over Dessy's head.

"Have you?" she asked in a small, low voice.

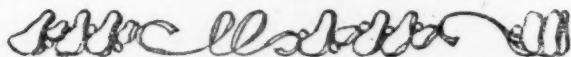
"No."

Another pause. Bert's gaze dropped half an inch. He coughed—cleared his throat—blurted harshly: "See here, Dessy, I've got no money to take you any place Sunday afternoon or any other time!" Pointedly he resumed the copying of the kimono grievance.

Dessy's fingers, red and blue and green-gemmed, thrummed nervously on her bare arms. Then,—and her voice was smaller, lower,— "It doesn't cost anything to go to Lincoln Park, Bert!"

"Lincoln Park!"—incredulously. Bert's gaze flashed down till it was level with Dessy's eyes, lingered longingly on the lowered bronze lashes. "*You* wouldn't go *there*!"

The lashes swept up. There was a scintillation as though gold dust were flecked from dewdrops. "Yes, I would," cried Dessy vehemently. "I'd love to—with *you*."



The KNIGHT and the DAY

BY JOHN BARTON OXFORD

LET us begin with the day. It is a day when chivalry is dead, we are told. Chivalry, it would seem, can find no reasonable excuse for existing. What with all this agitation of equal rights, the invasion of new domains by a heretofore supposedly gentler sex, the cries of "Votes for women," the skyward-sailing pillar-boxes and the smashed-in windows of our long-suffering brothers in official life across the seas, chivalry has gasped a horrified gasp, thrown up its useless hands, retired to an inconspicuous corner and resignedly but firmly given up the

Illustrated
By
Grant T.
Reynard

ghost, as it seems eminently proper it should do.

Certain learned gentlemen of a speculative and philosophic turn of mind tell us that this is all in the due order of things, that it was something to be expected and quite unavoidable. The world moves, and if chivalry happens unfortunately to get in its way, why chivalry must pay the penalty by being run over and crushed out of all semblance of entity. That is all there is to it. The days of the *Launfals* and the *Galahads* were all very well, we are led to believe, but at present they fit only into the songs of

minor poets or high-colored mural decorations.

But even in these highly progressive or decadent times—and this depends, of course, on your personal point of view—there occasionally rides forth some unplumed knight to swear by his dear lady and triumph or be vanquished in her defense before the eyes of all the world.

And, having thus passed over the day and come to the knight, let us follow him to the lists and mark his progress in that strange, topsyturvy hodge-podge of a tournament that we are pleased to call Modern Life.



Alan McFarren sat by the one window of the little kitchen. On the window-sill was a potted geranium, just coming into bloom. Over his head a canary hopped tirelessly about its cage and filled the little room with its tweets and twitters. McFarren's hair was white; his face was heavily wrinkled. Also, just at present it was very pasty and sallow. Beside him was a small table covered with bottles and medicine glasses. The morning paper was on his knees; but he was not reading it, nor had he been for a good half-hour.

At this time of the afternoon he was always listening. He was listening now—his head cocked on one side, his old eyes expectant every time he heard a footfall in the vestibule, two flights below.

"She'll be late the night," he mused. "I wonder what it is that's kapin' her till this time."

A loud-ticking clock on the mantel was swinging its hands towards six. Alan glanced at it and folded the paper on his knees.

"She'll be late, the night," he mused. "I wonder what it is that's kapin' her till this time?"

He arose stiffly from the chair and took off a cover of the stove. The fire did not seem to be to his liking, for he began to prod it with a poker; after which, he added a few shovelfuls of coal from the hod and opened the draughts.

Then he went to the little cupboard in the chimney and took down the teapot with the pinch of tea in it. He filled the nickel tea-kettle at the faucet and set it to boil on the front of the stove.

He had just finished his tasks when the door opened and there came into the room a gray-haired little woman. An old bonnet of rusty black was askew on her head; a black shawl, even more rusty than the bonnet, covered her bent shoulders.

"And why are ye movin' about like this?" she asked. "Ye're to be a gintlemin and sit still in the chair till ye're all well. 'Tis not best to take anny chances, you comin' on the fine way that ye are."

"'Twill do me no harm to be movin' round this wee bit," said McFarren. "Sure, I believe I feel the better for it. I've done naught at all but set the tea goin', because ye're a bit late, Delia."

"Ye must sit still in the chair for a week or so yet, like the doctor told ye," she chided. "I'll look after the tea when I get home nights. Ye've nothin' to do now but just get good and well. Ye've nothin' to worrit ye now I have the job that brings us in a dollar every day—enough for us to live on till ye get strong again. So sit down in yer chair, dearie."

Alan obediently returned to his chair. The canary had ceased its twitterings; the kettle on the front of the stove was beginning to hum. Mrs. McFarren had sunk into a chair close to the door. She was fumbling with the strings of the bonnet. No sooner was she seated than her head drooped wearily and McFarren noted the heavy rings under her eyes.

"Ye're tired," said he. "Ye're clane beat out. The job is too much for ye."

"Too much for me!" sniffed she scornfully. "I'd like to know if I can't do a few hours of easy mendin' each day without bein' told the job is too much for me. 'Tis no more I do now than I often did here at home, mendin' the socks of ye, Alan McFarren. Too much for me, indeed! Ye talk like I was sugar or salt. Now I'll get yer supper. Will ye be havin' a bit of toast the night?"

Alan from his chair watched her closely as she threw off the shawl and began to prepare the supper. He noticed her steps were painfully slow. She moved as if each step cost her an effort.

Nor had she more than swallowed a

cup of tea at the table before she dropped her head on her outspread arms and fell into a sound sleep. Alan's lips were pressed hard together. He sat staring up at the canary's cage with troubled eyes, while Mrs. McFarren slept on with many noisy gurgles at the table.

Next morning after his wife had gone to work, he shaved and dressed himself carefully. Then, like some disobedient and daring child venturing into forbidden explorations, he went down the stairs to the street. His legs were very wobbly and at first his head had an unpleasant tendency to spin; but he resolutely headed downtown, nor did he pause until he had reached the lone, low building which housed the plant of the Eureka Laundry.

Alan went to the office and asked for Mr. Furbush, the superintendent.

"Ye have a Mrs. McFarren workin' here for ye, have ye not?" Alan asked.

Furbush admitted that such was the case.

"And what'll be her job?" Alan demanded.

"She's working at one of the mangles."

"One of the mangles! And what'll that be like? Is it hard work—harder than sewin', now?" Alan persisted.

The superintendent looked at him closely. "Just step to this window," he said. "There," he went on, pointing a finger, "is a mangle—that big machine with the rollers just beyond those tables over there."

"I'm obliged to ye, sor," said McFarren. "It'll be a hard job for an old woman?"

"Well, it's not the easiest work in the world."

"I'm obliged to ye," said Alan again, and took his departure.

He moved slowly up the street with his head bent.

"So that's what she's really doin' to earn the six dollars a week," he muttered to himself. "She told me she were sewin' on buttons that had come off in the wash, and mendin' holes in clothes where they'd caught in the machines! I knew from the worn-out look of her each night 'twas somethin' harder than that. She can't stand work like that;

and the heat and the steam of the place, too! She *shan't* stand it."

Ten minutes later, McFarren was sitting beside a mahogany desk in an office on the top floor of a certain downtown building.

"Give me somethin' to do—anythin', Mr. Keeler," he was imploring the kindly man behind the desk.

"You don't look very fit, yet, Mac," Keeler observed, running his eye over the emaciated figure.

"I am," McFarren declared eagerly. "I gotta get something. I'm well enough now. Try me and see. The old woman's workin' in a laundry—at a mangle, Mr. Keeler. I can't l'ave her. She's wearin' herself out. I'll do annything."

Keeler knitted his brows.

"As bad as that, Mac?" he said, frowning. "Where's the money you saved?"

"The sickness took it, all of it," said Alan.

Keeler thought for a moment.

"Look here," he said at length, "—can you ride a horse?"

"Try me and see."

"Well," said Keeler, "it has just occurred to me that Goodrich wants a man to dress up in armor and ride round town to advertise his Shield Brand spices. Maybe you could get the job. I'll give you a note to him."

At eleven McFarren was again back at the office asking for Mr. Furbush.

"Well?" said that gentleman briskly, when he saw who his caller was.

"Ye've no easier job here for that Mrs. McFarren I was askin' ye about this morning—the one that works at the mangle?"

The superintendent shook his head. "Why—no, I don't believe I have."

McFarren looked through the office doorway to a little raised platform near the open front windows, where sat a

young woman sewing away industriously.

"Now what'll that girl be doin'?" he asked.

"She?" said Furbush. "Oh, she's the mender—sews on buttons that come off the clothes and mends places that get torn in the machines."



There came into the room a gray-haired little woman.

"Look," said McFarren, "I want Mrs. McFarren to have a job like that. Now don't shake yer head till ye've heard me out. I'm her husband. I've been laid up for ten months and our money's all gone. She's workin' here to keep us goin'. She can't stand it at the mangle; the work's too hard for her. Now I've got a job, but I don't want her to know it. I've got a chance to ride a horse from eight in the mornin' till five in the after-

noon in an advertisin' scheme, and get a dollar seventy-five a day out of it. She don't think I'm able to work yet, so I don't want her to know annything about it; and it would be just as well for her to be doin' somethin' to account for the money that's comin' in. I want ye to put her on that sewin' job and I'll bring ye every Saturday the six dollars that ye pay her. Will ye do that?"

Furbush looked at the eager old face close to his. Something in the eyes softened his heart strangely.

"Why, yes; I guess under those circumstances we can fix it."

"I'm obliged to ye," said McFarren, wringing his hand warmly. "Not a word to her, mind ye."

"I understand," said Furbush.

At eight o'clock next morning there was a great rattle and clatter in a certain uptown livery stable. Two men boosted a figure in full armor into the high-backed saddle. Some one cracked the horse sharply on the flank and out into the summer sunshine, girt in mail from head to foot, a long lance, pennon-tipped, in his right hand, a heavy metal shield on his left arm, sped Alan McFarren. His yellow saddle cloths sang the praises of the Shield Brand spices; the pennon at his lance-tip bore their trade-mark; his burnished shield mentioned the fact that they were absolutely pure; across the top of his helmet was an invitation to all the world to send for free samples and learn their real worth.

A suit of armor is not the most comfortable habiliment in the world under the best of circumstances. On a hot summer day to be encased in one is very much like being confined in an oven. McFarren felt the perspiration starting from every pore of his body; but grimly he set his teeth.

"Tis no worse for me than it is for Delia at the mangle," he told himself, and forthwith, to stiffen his courage, he spurred his caparisoned steed into the street on which was the Eureka Laundry. By a front window, as he sped past, Alan saw his wife sewing. That made it easier. The armor was more bearable after that. He went galloping

downtown with a great clatter of jangling accoutrements and a great craning of necks in his wake.

He was home before his wife arrived that evening. He was sitting in the chair by the window, the morning paper on his knees, the canary chirping above his head quite as usual, the tea-kettle humming on the stove.

But Mrs. McFarren looked at him with troubled eyes.

"Dear, how white and drawn ye look," said she. "Ye're feelin' so well."

"I haven't felt so well since I was took, Delia," he lied bravely. "I'm gettin' back me old strength. Are ye tired?"

"They've made it easier for me at the laundry, dearie," said she. "They've given me even lighter work to do. It's mendin' just the same," she hastened to add. "But they's not so much of it, and the pay's the same."

"Now, aint that fine," said he. "Ye'll not have to be doin' even that long. I'll be workin' again soon."

"Ye'll not work till ye look much better than ye do now," she declared. "I've a mind to have the doctor over, as it is."

"Doctor nothin'!" said he. "Just get me some supper and see if me appetite is that of a sick man."

It was a day of terrific heat. McFarren had stopped as much as he dared in the shade of the trees. The armor seemed stifling him; the heat seemed searing him to the very bone. He rode slowly uptown, his breath coming in short, quick gasps. His head was swimming crazily. Now and again he swayed in the saddle as far as the stiff armor would let him.

"I'll stick it out," he told himself. "I'll not give it up and I've her go back to the mangle. I believe a look at her would give me a bit of heart."

Therefore he swung his horse into the street where the rumble and grind of the Eureka Laundry's mangles sent out their plaint.

The heat in the narrow street seemed to sear him. Dark spots swam crazily before his eyes. His one thought was that he must have air—air at once. He strove to push up the helmet's visor.

A moment later there was excitement in the office of the Eureka Laundry; for



The armor seemed to be stifling him.

directly in front of the building, the armored gentleman whose accoutrements proclaimed the virtues of Shield Brand spices had toppled off his horse and crashed with a metallic rattle to the pavement.

Mrs. McFarren saw the fall, and she too ran out with the office force to the rescue.

"Stand back there!" "Give him air!" "Lift up his head!" "Open that thing on his face!" The advice was of the usual futile and varied sort.

Some one stooped and removed, with much difficulty, the upper part of the helmet. Mrs. McFarren uttered a wild scream and threw herself beside the prostrate figure in armor.

McFarren came to his senses on his own bed. Through the door he could see the geranium, just coming to bloom, on the window-sill, and the canary hopping about with its usual restlessness in its cage.

He tried to sit up. Mrs. McFarren's hand pushed him gently back to the pillows.

"Oh, Alan, Alan, what made you?" she cried. "I've had a talk with Mr. Furbush. He's told me why I got the easy job at the laundry, and where the money that paid for it came from, too."

McFarren scowled. "I couldn't let ye work at that mangle," said he. "And ye're not goin' back to it, not even if I have to crawl into them smotherin' tin cans of clothes again!"

"Ye'll not have to worry about that," said she. "For my work at mendin' has showed Mr. Furbush how good I can sew, and the young lady that does it now is goin' to l'ave soon to be married. He's goin' to keep me right on the job and give it to me when she goes. So all ye have to do now is stay here and get well and not worry. Ye shouldn't have tried to do what ye did, annyway—you as sick as ye were. I could 'a' stood the work at the mangle, all right."

"Ye could not," said he, "and if I thought ye was goin' back to it I'd crawl out of here and go at me job again to-morrer, even if I had to lash meself on the horse to stay on, this time."

Mrs. McFarren bent over him to kiss his thin lips. So *Guinevere* may have kissed *Lancelot* after some of his feats at arms. And this isn't the day of chivalry, either.





We laid the
pearl on a
piece of black
cloth and
stared
at it.

THE reek of dead shell-fish rode triumphantly on the prowling breezes that swept up from the Coral Sea. The striped poles of pearling schooners stood up like black fingers in the blue wash of the tropical night. Scraps of songs, harsh and heathenish, filtered out of the fo'c'stles where Jap and Malay chanted weird tunes which tugged at one's soul like lashings that bound it to a barbaric past.

The night was hot, and the three men upon the veranda of the bungalow high up above the sand beach were strangely silent. Conversation had been throttled by the heavy atmosphere. Two of the trio sprawled upon the broken rattan chairs, while the biggest man of the three dozed in a hammock which was swung between two of the rough-hewn posts. The light from a ship's lamp hanging from the roof fell upon his strong face.

The smaller of the two occupying the chairs, a tropic-wasted, heat-wrinkled man, broke the silence.

"Tell us the story of the Virgin of Tau, Grondahl," he said. "Lawton has never heard the yarn. Wake up man, and let us hear it."

Grondahl, the pearl buyer, lifted his shaggy head from the pillow of dried seaweed. His half smoked cigar fell from his hand, and his two companions watched him recover it. Without lifting himself up, he pushed a pajama-covered leg over the side of the hammock, felt around with his bare foot till his caloused sole touched the burning end of the Manila, then deftly caught the cigar with his toes and lifted it to his hand. Grondahl's feet were nearly as useful as his hands. He boasted that he had not worn shoes for more than thirty years, and his enemies called him "Grondahl the Gorilla."

There were many stories told of Grondahl's pedal dexterity. There was a tale told of a French escapee from Noumea who, in a row over a card game at Port Moresby, had suddenly covered the German with a revolver and intimated that Grondahl had three minutes to prepare for another world. The pearl buyer's hands were above the table, but the escaped convict was not aware of the useful feet that were tucked away beneath the pine boards. Grondahl's prehensile toes found a knife which the German had previously dropped upon the floor so that it might be ready for just such

A Tear from Buddha's Eyes

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

Author of "The White Tentacles," "The
Spotted Panther," "The Blue Lizard," etc.

Illustrated by William Oberhardt

an emergency, and the New Caledonian escapee was so astonished to receive a wicked thrust in the ribs that he dropped the revolver in amazement.

A thousand such tales were told of Grondahl, strange tales that one believed after observing the big, aggressive nose, the flinty blue eyes, and the jaw which stuck out like the fender of a street car. Grondahl was a primitive brute, a strong, forceful man who was known at every pearl fishery between Lohia and the outer Paumotus. He dealt in pearls, big pearls, and had had the good luck to arrive at many lonely places at the moment when the most beautiful of "Buddha's tears" had been torn from "silver lip" or "black edge."

The man whom the ague-wasted one had called Lawton, stirred himself and seconded the request which his companion had made for the story.

"I'd like to hear it, Grondahl," he said. "Henderson tells me that you are the only one who knows its true history. Do you feel inclined to unbosom yourself?"

For a full minute the German remained silent; then he spoke.

"I know the whole story of the Virgin of Tau," he answered. "I know all

about it. In the night that big pearl comes up and dances before my eyes. Dances, mind you! I see it in my dreams like I saw it the night that Peterson found it. I see it as I saw it then: a big, white pearl with the finest 'skin' that I have ever seen. A 'skin' that showed now and then the most wonderful pink flush, as if the blood of a sea nymph were pulsing beneath it.

"And it was the biggest pearl that ever came out of these yellow waters. They lie who say it was not. I have handled pearls for thirty-five years and I dream of the big ones. And nine dreams out of every ten are about the Virgin of Tau!"

"It was on a summer's night that Peterson found it. He was Hans the Unlucky for years. There was not a man in all this dirty Malay Archipelago that was as unlucky as Hans Peterson. Bad luck was always walking behind him and taking a kick at him when he had his head turned. If a cyclone came hopping over the horizon it would rush at Hans Peterson's lugger and smash it into little pieces that you could pick your teeth with. If a negro was going to have the small-pox he would go and hire with Peterson just a little while before he

got the disease. If there was a coral fang somewhere in the sea that a hundred boats had sailed over without getting a scratch, that coral tooth would get a little bigger when it saw Hans Peterson's boat coming so that it could poke a hole in the bottom of his old lugger as it went by.

"He had bad luck, but he would laugh at his bad fortune. He would laugh at everything that happened and say: 'Never mind, I have my health, and I have little Thelma.' Thelma was his daughter that he left in Stockholm, and he carried round with him a picture of her that he would show to everybody.

"He had a lugger that sailed like a beer barrel, and one night as he lay at Tau he called out to me from the deck of his boat. It was near midnight when he called me, and I was lying in my hammock when I heard him cry out.

" 'Grondahl, I want you,' he shouted, and his voice made me think that a sea serpent was climbing over the rail of his old tub.

" 'What do you want me for?' I asked.

" 'I want to tell you something,' he cried. 'I have had a dream, Grondahl, and I want to tell it to you.'

" 'What would you think of a man calling you at twelve o'clock at night to tell you a dream? I lay for five minutes wondering if I should go over to him; then my curiosity bit me and I went. I pulled over to *The Papuan Maid* and I climbed onto the deck, and there was Peterson waiting for me. He was standing there shivering like a piece of that funny blue grass that grows on the Fly River and which shivers when there is not a breath of wind.

" 'What is up with you?' I cried.

" 'I have had a dream, Grondahl,' he said, 'a strange dream! Mother of God, yes! I was lying asleep on the deck and I thought that a girl who was more beautiful than the witch girl that Red Rollo found in the snow, floated in from the bay and beckoned me to follow her. Beckoned me to follow her out across the waters! I could see her, Grondahl, floating over the rail of the boat and beckoning me with her long, white arms to follow her.

" 'At first I would not go. And then she came back close to me again and I saw that it was my little daughter Thelma who is in Stockholm! I saw that it was Thelma, Grondahl! She had Thelma's blue eyes and her red lips and her bronze hair. Yes, she was Thelma! And when she beckoned me again I got up and followed her over the rail and out across the water.

" 'In my dream I thought I floated out across the water like a piece of this-tle-down in the trade wind. It was wonderful! Thelma, my little daughter who is in Stockholm, was leading me out across the harbor!'

" 'Mind you, this is what Hans the Unlucky told me that he dreamed that night on the deck of *The Papuan Maid*. This is what he told me when I came over to see what was wrong with him. I remember it as if it was yesterday.

" 'My little daughter led me out between the two black rocks,' he said. 'The two black rocks where the *Kan Shiang* went down. She led me out beyond the outer reef and then she stopped and pointed into the water. And after I had looked into the water for a little while I saw something that made my eyes bulge.'

" 'What did you see?' I asked. 'What did you see, Peterson?'

" 'I saw the biggest pearl that I have ever seen,' he answered. 'The most wonderful pearl that I have heard of. I saw a pearl that is bigger than 'The Smile of Krishna,' the one that was fished up at Tuticorin. I saw it lying out there in three fathoms of water. Thelma pointed it out to me, and I saw it! It was in a shell, Grondahl, but I seemed to be able to see through the shell when her white finger pointed down at the water! I might be a crazy man, but I saw it! Mother of God, I saw it!'

" 'I looked at Peterson when he told me that story, and I wondered. Everyone who hunts for pearls dreams of big pearls. Even the negroes dream of big pearls. The Lohia divers have dream-women that give them little bits of charms that make them dream, so it was not wonderful for Hans the Unlucky to dream a dream of pearls. But the way he shivered when he told me



BERNARD T.

"In my dream, Thelma, my little daughter, was leading me out across the water . . . She led me out beyond the outer reef and then she stopped and pointed into the water . . . I saw something that made my eyes bulge."

that dream made me think that it was a dream that was out of the common.

"She led me, Grondahl!" he cried. "My little daughter, Thelma, who is twelve thousand miles away, led me out across the water! I saw her blue eyes and her red lips as she smiled at me. I saw her bronze hair as the breezes that came nosing out of the Pacific played with the little ringlets on her white neck!"

"But it was only a dream," I growled. "You were asleep, man!"

"Yes, I was asleep," snapped Peterson. "but it was a wonderful dream. It was my daughter Thelma! Thelma, Grondahl! My little child whose picture I carry near my heart!"

"I stood and looked at Hans the Unlucky. This business of pearl hunting is one that makes one take notice of signs and omens and dreams. It is a business that gets one crazy on matters like that. Some divers think they are lucky in the time of the full moon; others have certain days and months which they think are luckier for them. And white men in this game are just as bad as the negroes who pay money to the *pillal karras*, or shark charmers, who go with them and protect them from the big gray-nurse sharks.

"So I was not inclined to laugh at the dream of Hans Peterson. He told it to me in a way that made me feel that it was not a common dream, and that night was a night that made the mystery of the Archipelago creep into my bones. It was one of those nights when the whole world seems to be waiting for something to happen. And when I tried to laugh at Peterson's story I could not.

"But there is no shell near the outer reef," I said.

"Thelma showed me shell!" cried Peterson, looking into my face. "Thelma pointed down with her white finger into the water and I saw! I saw, Grondahl! By the bones of St. Anne, I saw!"

"You saw it in three fathoms of water?" I asked. "You saw the pearl in the shell?"

"I saw it!" he repeated quietly. "She pointed it out to me and I stared at it, and after I had stared at it for a long while I woke up, and I was all wet with perspiration."

"Well, you can go out there to-morrow," I said, trying to make little of his dream; "I am going back to bed."

"I will go there to-night!" said Hans the Unlucky. "I could not close my eyes lest I might forget the spot that she pointed out. I will go now!"

"It was useless to try to stop him. I called him a crazy Swede but he would have his own way. He could not rest till he had seen the spot where the girl that came to him in a dream had led him. I told him he was mad, but he took no notice.

"He roused up three of his divers, and when they protested he rushed them into the boat and cursed them. And I got into that boat too. That was a strange business, and I wanted to see what would be the end of it.

"That Swede did not lose confidence in his dream as we pulled across the bay. On the way out to the reef he pointed out to me the track over which the dream girl had led him, and I was puzzled.

"You are a crazy man," I said, "and I am a fool to go with you. I will lose my night's rest."

"I will give you a look at something that will pay you for losing your night's rest," he cried. "I will give you a look at something that will open your eyes, Grondahl!"

"There was a big moon watching us from way up above Papua, a moon that looked as if it was astonished to see us going out to dive for shell at midnight. But Hans the Unlucky did not think of the time just then. He pushed those three drowsy divers overboard in the place that he felt sure was the spot the girl had pointed out to him, and I thought he would go overboard himself in his anxiety. I have never seen a dream affect a man as it affected him. He was out of his mind with the vision that had come to him while he slept.

"Those boys went down six times and they could only get eight shells. But those few shells seemed to satisfy Peterson. Suddenly his nervousness left him and he gave an order to make for the lugger.

"We have enough," he said, and he looked curiously at me as he said it. "I am sure we have enough."

"We pulled back to *The Papuan Maid* in a silence that made my ears ache. It was a tremendously quiet night, and as we pulled back to the lugger I was beginning to think that I was as crazy as Peterson, because I was watching those few shells just as he was watching them. I was watching those shells as if I were trying to see what was in them, although I kept telling myself that I was a fool to listen to that humbug.

"I followed Hans the Unlucky down into his cabin. He put those shells on the table, one after the other, and the shell that he put at the head of the line he took up and put at the bottom of the line. He put that first shell last, and then he started to open those shells one after the other. In dead silence he started to open them, and I watched him. I watched him with my eyes bulging like you see the eyes of the red-faced British tourists bulging when they are watching the fire walkers at Hue.

"Peterson opened them one after the other till he came to that eighth shell. It was a malformed shell, and he picked it up and looked at it. He looked at it, looked at me, and then he opened it. He opened it and took something from it with a cry that cracked the silence as if it had been hit with a hammer. He took something from that shell, and that something was the Virgin of Tau!

"After we had dried that pearl we laid it on a piece of black cloth on the cabin table and we stared at it. It was a beauty! It was the most wonderful pearl I have ever seen, and I have seen some wonders. I have seen the Red Ghost and the Blush of Venus, and I have handled the Eye of Siva which the Rajah of Dholpur gave fifty thousand dollars for. But I have never seen anything like the Virgin of Tau! We rolled it backward and forward on that piece of black cloth, and I examined it minutely for flaws. But it had no flaws. It had the most wonderful 'skin' I have ever seen on a pearl. It had a luster that was magnificent. I had thrills as I watched the wonderful blush that would steal over it like the blush that steals over the face of a virgin when she hears the first words of love. It was then that

I christened it the Virgin of Tau, and Hans the Unlucky said it was a good name.

" 'It is a very good name,' he said. 'My little daughter Thelma brought it to me,' and the name will do for both. She is a white virgin and so is the pearl.'

"Peterson and I sat down and stared at that pearl that had a drop of the blood of Aphrodite in its bosom. It was alive! It was alive, and it drew our heads towards it till our faces were not more than six inches away from the black cloth upon which it lay. I could see nothing and hear nothing. I knew that Peterson was babbling of Thelma and his dream as he thrust his face alongside of mine, but I took no notice of him. My lips and throat were dry. Thirty-five years I have been in this business and I have never seen a pearl like that one.

" 'It is just as I saw it, Grondahl!' cried Peterson. 'It is just as I saw it when little Thelma pointed it out to me.'

"Peterson was crying then, and I got thrills up and down my spine as I listened to him chatter. It was a strange business, and I wondered over it as I listened to him. I could not understand. But I have told this story to men who have been out in this East for years, and they were not inclined to laugh.

"I do not know how long we stared at that pearl. We must have been looking at it for hours. It was midnight when Peterson called me to listen to his dream, and the sunbeams were streaming into the cabin before we came to our senses. It was a wonderful pearl in the night, but when we looked at it as the smiling sunbeams kissed it, it was a gem we could never forget.

"I turned my back on the pearl so that I could remember that I was Johann Grondahl, who lived by buying pearls.

" 'I will buy it from you, Peterson,' I said.

" 'You will not!' he screamed. 'You will not buy it!'

" 'I will give you five thousand dollars for it,' I cried.

" 'I will not take twenty thousand!' he screamed. 'My little Thelma guided

me to it. I will give it to her, Grondahl. I will give it to her! It is her pearl! I will not sell it! I will not!"

"It will be better for you if you do," I said.

"But I will not!" he screamed. "It is Thelma's pearl! She guided me to it in my dream and pointed it out to me as it lay beneath the water."

"He caught that pearl up in his two big hands, and it shone like a leprous spot in the grime that was on his calloused palms. Then he sprang back from me as if he thought I was going to snatch it from him. He was crazy with excitement, and he had cause to be excited. He had a pearl that was bigger than I had ever seen in all my life.

"Go easy," I said. "Do not lose your head, man."

"But Peterson was crazy with excitement. He put that pearl to his lips and kissed it like a mother might kiss a baby that has been given back to her after she has thought it dead. He stood as far from me as he could, kissing it. And I was mad with Peterson when I saw him hugging that pearl. I wanted to buy it. I wanted to buy it badly, but when I looked at the light in Peterson's eyes I knew that he would not bargain with me just then. I would have to wait till he cooled down. I made him give me another look at it and then I went out of the cabin with the devil of covetousness in my brain.

"The news got abroad that Peterson had found a big pearl. You cannot keep things like that quiet, and you need not speak to let people know that you have made a discovery. That is, if the discovery is as valuable as the one Peterson had made. He could not calm himself that morning, and those three boys who were routed out of their bunks to dive in the middle of the night told the story to their shipmates.

"That story spread in a hurry. And the story of the dream got out, too. One of those quick-eared Malays must have overheard Peterson telling me that dream on the deck. It went through the pearling fleet that Peterson had dreamed a dream, and that a girl who was as beautiful as an houri had come to him

and beckoned him out to the reef where she had pointed down at the big pearl that was in three fathoms of water.

"That was the kind of story that grows wings. It was a story that spread like the small-pox. Men came to look at that pearl, but Peterson would not show it to them. And that made them think it was bigger than it really was. Hans the Unlucky would only shake his head when they asked to see it, and when they talked of buying it he would scream out to them and tell them to get off his boat.

"I wanted to buy that pearl. I never wanted a pearl so much. I went to Peterson a dozen times and asked him to sell it to me. I nearly went on my bended knees to him.

"Sell it!" I would cry. "Sell it to me and get the money and go back to Stockholm. Perhaps your daughter wants to see you and that is why she came to you in a dream."

"I will not sell it," he would say. "I will keep it for Thelma. It is Thelma's pearl, and when I give it to her she can do what she likes with it."

"Sell it to me, Peterson!" I would keep on. "Sell it to me now, and I will give you seven and a half thousand dollars for it."

"But he would only shake his head and walk away from me.

"Some brute will stick a knife into you," I would say. "You will be robbed."

"If they stick a knife in me they will not get it," he said, one day when I tried to make him change his mind. "I have put it where no one will find it but myself. It will stay there till Thelma gets here from Stockholm. I have sent for her to come."

"That was the first I knew about Peterson hiding the pearl. He was afraid that some one would rob him of it, and he had hidden The Virgin of Tau where he thought no one could find it.

"No one will get it if they stick a knife into me," he cried. "It is not on the boat."

"That bit of news went up and down the beach too. Hans the Unlucky had hidden that pearl somewhere so that no one could rob him of it. I think

Peterson was glad that the tale went round, because there were a few at that spot who would not think twice of sticking a knife into his ribs to get that wonderful gem. There were not many angels around that quarter, and a pearl like that one of Peterson's was the kind of grease to make one slip from the narrow path.

"I was trying to buy that pearl from Peterson for four weeks; then one morning a curious thing happened. Peterson, in walking across the deck of *The Papuan Maid*, was hit on the head by a wood block that slipped from the mast. For twelve hours he was unconscious, and when he recovered consciousness he had forgotten something—something that was more important to him than anything in the world: he had forgotten where he had hidden that big white pearl that I had christened the Virgin of Tau!

"That was a curious thing. The most important thing on his mind at that moment had been wiped out. My friend, Doctor Besser, explained the scientific reason. It was all quite simple when it was explained. A clot of blood had blurred the tablet on which the hiding place was recorded, and Hans the Unlucky was still Hans the Unlucky. He had found something that was more beautiful than anything ever taken out of these yellow waters, and he had hidden it away in a place that he could not remember.

"It made me cry when he told me, and I am not tender-hearted. Old Mr. Nemesis, who walks around with a grouch, had thrown that block on the top of Peterson's head and—*pouf!*—he knew as little about the hiding place of that pearl as the Kaiser Wilhelm knows about this business that I am in. Mind you, he knew of the dream and everything connected with the dream. Nothing was blotted out of his mind but that one little thing. He could tell of every tiny incident that ever had happened to him, except that one little matter of the hiding place of the pearl.

"That unlucky happening made Peterson a crazy man, and it sent stories out from this place that brought a few ugly

prowlers here. Somewhere about this place a pearl was hidden that was worth a fortune. We knew that it was somewhere close, because Peterson had not gone away to any distance from the time he had found that pearl to the time the block fell on his head, and a few came here thinking they might locate the hiding place.

"The story of the finding of the Virgin of Tau and the tale about Peterson forgetting its hiding place, went northward to Hongkong and Yokohama. It went south to Sydney and Melbourne, and it went across the Pacific to San Francisco, and from there to New York. It made dealers in Maiden Lane look up and laugh when they heard of the size of the Virgin of Tau. But they did not see that pearl as I saw it in the cabin of *The Papuan Maid* when the sunbeams crept in to kiss its wonderful 'skin.'

"That story made a hit. Weeks after the block fell on Peterson's head I saw a full page from a New York Sunday paper which told the story. There was a picture of Peterson lying on the deck of his lugger with the dream-girl circling round him and beckoning him out to show him the big pearl in the water beyond the reef. There was another picture of the tackle block falling on his head, and there was a third picture of Peterson looking like a crazy man as he walked up and down the beach, scratching holes in the sand trying to find the place where he had hidden that big pearl. It was a mighty good story. It was headed:

WILL THE DREAM PEARL EVER BE FOUND?

Hans the Unlucky Wins a Fortune
and Forgets Where He Put It.

"In three months Peterson aged ten years. He did no work; he just hunted for that pearl night and day, and it was pitiful to look at him.

"I should have sold it to you, Gron-dahl,' he would say to me, again and again.

"Yes,' I would answer, 'you should have sold it, but what is the use of tell-

In front of him, with his arms stretched out toward Peterson, and his green eyes fixed on the Swede, was that Hindu!



ing that to me now? It is gone, and I would not worry over it. Some day when you are not thinking of it you will remember the place where you have hidden it. You will recall everything. The exact position of that hiding place will come out of the back of your head, and you will pounce on it quick before it gets away.'

"'I will never remember it,' he would say. 'I will never remember where I put it, Grondahl.'

"'Nonsense,' I would say, 'you will remember. You will remember and you will sell it to me before you have time to put it away again in some new place.'

"Then, one day, Thelma, Peterson's daughter, arrived from Stockholm. She was a beautiful girl, and it nearly made me cry to see her walk around with Peterson. She would walk around with him as he tried to think of the spot where he had hidden the big pearl. Up

and down the beach they would go together, Peterson thinking he might see something which might make him remember the hiding place. And the loafers who were around this spot would watch him, thinking they might get some clue to the hiding place of the pearl through some action of his. They would watch Peterson and the girl—who was as beautiful as Luema, who was turned into a water-lily.

"And I watched them day after day, and I would say to myself, 'If he cannot think of the spot where he put that pearl he will go crazy.'

"And all the time he was searching, I knew that the girl was praying. Night and day she would pray. Whenever I looked at her I could see her red lips moving in prayer—prayer that she was offering up to the Almighty so that He would save her father's mind by making him remember where he had put that pearl.

"I told you that the loss of the Virgin of Tau brought a few inquisitive people to this place. It brought men who thought they could find the spot where Peterson had hidden the gem. Mind you, they were not the kind that would think of giving that pearl back to Peterson if they got their fingers on it. They were not philanthropic people. They came here to get that pearl for themselves if they could only locate the spot where Peterson had hidden it.

"In that bunch was one that gave me a creepy feeling. I did not like him because he had a snakey look. He was a Hindu, I think, and he had curious green eyes that were fixed on Peterson every time poor old Hans the Unlucky walked around trying to think of where he had hidden the pearl.

"That green-eyed fellow knew the story, and I thought by the way he looked at Peterson, that he had some plan in his ugly head. He had more brains than the others; and he watched Peterson always. He would watch the Swede and his daughter as they walked along the beach, and I wondered what he was thinking about. I was watching him because I did not want anybody but Peterson to get hold of that pearl. I wanted Peterson to get it so that I could buy it from him and make a big profit on it. So I did not like that green-eyed Hindu, who was a little bit more cunning than the other prowling wolves who would stick a knife in a man for five dollars in counterfeit money.

"Peterson had sold his lugger when Thelma came out to him from Stockholm, and he was living in a little shack on the side of the hill. He was living there with the girl. He could not work. He could do nothing but walk around trying to remember where he had put that big pearl. It was pitiful to watch him, and to watch that girl whose red lips were always moving in prayers to the Almighty to give him back that little bit of knowledge that had been wiped out by the blow.

"One night, Thelma walked down to my lugger to borrow a book, and I watched her go back up the track. The moon was not up, but there was a ghostly

light that made it possible for me to see her go up the little road that they had made to their shack.

"When she turned a corner of the little path and was hidden from my view by a clump of screw-palm, I went and sat down on the wharf, but I had not been sitting there for three minutes when I heard the patter of feet, and I turned around to see that girl flying down the track towards me.

"I jumped up and ran towards her, and as I ran I felt that something was wrong.

"What is up?" I cried. "What is wrong?"

"Quick! Quick!" she cried. "Quick, Mr. Grondahl! Help me!"

"What has happened?" I asked. "Tell me what has happened."

"Come and see!" she cried. "Come and see!"

"She started running back towards the little shack where Hans the Unlucky was living, and I went with her, running as fast as I could. There was something in her voice that made me hurry. I thought to myself that one of two things had happened: Peterson had gone mad or one of those prowling wolves had got a notion into his head that the pearl was not lost and had stuck a knife into the old man. I was sure that it was one of those things, and I did not bother to ask questions as I ran beside the girl up the track.

"We raced up the little path to the shack, and I saw that there was a light in the window, and as we got closer to the window the girl turned and put her finger up to me so that I crept forward on tip-toes. I crept up to the window and looked in, and what I saw made my blood boil. Hans the Unlucky was sitting on a gin-case in the middle of that room, and in front of him, with his arms stretched out towards Peterson, and his green eyes fixed on the Swede, was that Hindu!

"I had a big desire to rush in and tear that green-eyed devil into little pieces, but something told me to keep quiet. I caught the girl by the arm so that she would not cry out, and in silence we watched those two. We

watched Peterson sitting there and staring at that green-eyed devil who had his long arms outstretched and who was murmuring softly something that I could not hear. It was a mighty mysterious business to me.

"The Hindu stepped back towards the door, and Peterson lifted himself from the gin-case and followed him. And I bit my tongue to keep quiet just then. I am not a lover of colored people, and the way that Hindu had his arms thrust out as if the power was in his brown fingers to draw the Swede towards him, made me mad. Peterson was moving like a man in a dream, and as he moved that Hindu was whispering softly, ever so softly. That green-eyed devil's whispers came to me like the hiss of a snake. It made me feel mighty furious to stand there and look at him, but although I wanted to rush in and throttle that brute I kept myself quiet and waited.

"The Hindu backed through the door and Peterson followed him, and then, walking nearly side by side, they passed within three paces of the spot where Thelma and I were hiding. I had dragged her back into the shadow when I saw them coming through the door, and standing in a clump of bushes we watched them. And I heard what that Hindu was whispering as they passed. I heard part of it. Some of his words I could not understand, but as he walked by me I heard him repeating over and over again three or four lines in which was the name of the big pearl. I shall never forget those lines. They made me feel curious as he whispered them:

Ocean and mountain are under His
law—
He fashioned the wonderful Virgin
of Tau!
Whiter than moonshine, a pearl
without flaw,
The wonderful, shining, white Vir-
gin of Tau!

"Those were the lines. And Peterson went forward with a look in his eyes that made me think that he was trying to see something down at Rockhampton, eight hundred miles down the coast of Queensland.

"Save him!" whispered the girl.
'Save him, Mr. Grondahl!'

"I will save him," I whispered back.
'Do not make a noise. Trust to me and I will see that he does not come to any harm. Trust to me and we will settle Mr. Green Eyes.'

"And that girl and I went softly down the track after the Hindu and Hans the Unlucky. It was the most peculiar experience that had ever happened to me. As I sneaked quietly after them, I could see the Hindu just a little in the lead, with old Peterson walking forward like one in a trance.

"That was a funny business. That green-eyed devil had got Peterson under his fingers, and while he had him in that hypnotic condition he was thinking that he could do something with him that Peterson could not do for himself. That Hindu knew that Peterson still had within his head the hiding place of the Virgin of Tau. Still had it, mind you, but could not get at it. That doctor friend of mine tells me that we never forget, and that Hindu knew that Peterson had not forgotten. He had only lost track of the little memo' that he had made in his brain.

"Down the track to the beach went Peterson and the Hindu, the Swede going forward like a man walking in his sleep. The Hindu walked beside him, stepping lightly, like a leopard, and whispering all the time. He was doing his little chant with the name of the big pearl in it. He was whispering it into Peterson's ears, and at every step I took I got madder. I was anxious to get my fingers upon the Hindu's throat. And it was not altogether a love for Peterson that made me mad. I am Johann Grondahl, who lives by buying big pearls, and I wanted to buy the Virgin of Tau from Peterson when his brain would tell him where he had hidden it.

"It was a very quiet night, and the half light that came before the rising of the moon made it mysterious even to me, so I could well understand how it felt to the girl. Once I looked around at her, and her face was as white as the chalk cliffs of Telab.

"Peterson climbed into a boat on the leach, and the Hindu got in after him. Hans the Unlucky took the oars and sat down facing the Hindu, who still had his hands outstretched towards the old man's face. It was a warm night but I felt cold! That was not a healthy business to be in. Every now and then I wanted to make a rush, but a little voice at the back of my head would say, 'Grondahl, keep quiet. Watch and see

close enough for them to see us. The Hindu did not seem to be worrying much about anybody following him. He was busy whispering those words to Peterson which seemed to make the Swede keep his mind on the job that the green-eyed devil had put him to. Hans the Unlucky was sitting with his face towards us, because he was pulling the boat, but the Hindu had his back turned and that was lucky.



The Hindu kept on chanting and the Swede went forward.

what will happen.' So when that girl gripped my arm as she saw her father get into the boat I frowned at her not to make a noise.

"'Keep quiet,' I whispered. 'We will follow them. Keep quiet and trust to me!'

"Hans the Unlucky started to pull across the bay, and I put the girl in another boat and, ever so softly, we started out after those two, taking mighty fine care that we would not get

"Do you know the black rock that is across the bay from the wharf? Well, they pulled for that rock. Peterson pulled towards it, and Thelma and I followed softly. I never tingled with excitement so much in all my life as I did then. And the girl was nearly hysterical with excitement.

"'Keep quiet,' I breathed again and again. 'Keep quiet and everything will be all right.'

"Peterson and the Hindu landed on

the south side of the rock, and I pulled around to the west side, and as quickly as I could made a landing there. Then I climbed around the base of that big rock so that I could locate them and see what they were doing.

"I located them. Hans the Unlucky was climbing up that rock with the Hindu behind him, and the Hindu was still chanting his little chant. He was whispering it to that Swede as he climbed.

"We must go after them," I said to Thelma. "We must follow them."

"The blood in my head was pounding madly, and in front of my eyes there was a vision of that big white pearl that blushed when anyone looked at it. I had been dreaming every night for a month about that pearl. It had me nearly as crazy as it had Peterson.

"That was a climb up the slope of that rock. Peterson could climb, and so could the Hindu. That green-eyed devil climbed like a monkey, and now and then the breeze carried his chant to my ears.

"I was mighty scared that he would turn round and see us, but he was too busy with Peterson. He had to keep his eyes on Hans the Unlucky, and keep chanting that little chant which made the old man go forward.

"Up the slope we scrambled, Thelma and I keeping as far behind the Hindu as we could. It was a hard climb for that girl, and when we were about halfway up the rock I found that she could not keep up with me. And I could not help her along. I had to go ahead to see the end of that business.

"You must stay here and wait," I said. "You must! I will attend to that green-eyed gentleman and see that no harm will come to your father."

"I left her there, and I started to climb after those two, crawling on my stomach over the bare places because I was afraid that chanting gentleman would turn his head and get a look at me. I was as nervous as an old woman. Not nervous for Peterson's safety, mind you. I was nervous on account of the Virgin of Tau, which I knew was mighty close to us at that moment.

"Peterson reached a ledge about eighty feet above the water, and then he stopped. And when I poked my head up from behind a rock and looked at him I thought he was trying to get away from the influence which that green-eyed devil had put upon him. That is what I thought. I watched him as I stood there, and I watched the other fellow with his long arms and his infernal chant.

"But Peterson could not escape. The Hindu kept on chanting, and the Swede went forward as if he was being pushed towards the fissure in the rock that rose in front of the ledge upon which the two were standing. Inch by inch he went forward, and the Hindu crept after him like a devil who is waiting to pounce on a man that is going to commit some big sin. Every little bit of my skin was telling me just then what Peterson was going to do, and what that devil would do.

"The Hindu chanted softly, and very slowly Peterson's right hand went out towards that fissure in the rock. Slowly it went out towards the little crevice, but just as the fingers of Hans the Unlucky touched the stone, the Hindu said something which made the Swede stop. Peterson stood still, and the Hindu stepped forward and thrust his hand into the crevice towards which Peterson's fingers had moved as if some invisible power were pushing his hand towards that spot.

"I was cold then. I was wet with perspiration, and yet I was cold. And the little voice within my head kept telling me to be ready. 'Grondahl, if you want to make a profit on that big pearl, you must act quickly,' it said. 'You must act quickly.' And I made myself ready to act quickly. I wanted that pearl. I wanted it to be mine for a little while before I would sell it again. I wanted to hold it and to kiss it like Hans the Unlucky had held it in his cabin. Pearls are my life. I would sooner look at a pearl like the Virgin of Tau than look at the most beautiful woman in the world.

"I crouched like a tiger, with my eyes on the Hindu. He thrust his hand into that crevice in the rock and he drew out

a little parcel which he started to unroll. And there was no one in the world but that Hindu just then. There was no one in the world as far as I was concerned!

"I crept a little closer, then a little closer still. The Hindu was unrolling the strip of black cloth that was around something, and I did not want anybody to tell me what that something was. I knew! I knew!

"I saw the Hindu's head go forward as he finished unwinding that piece of cloth. I saw his head go forward as if he had been suddenly gripped by the ears and dragged towards the thing that was in his hand, and then I sprang. I sprang at him as he stood there on the ledge of rock.

"That was a devil of a fight. That Hindu was no milk-and-water person. He was a muscular devil who was as hard to hold as a rock snake. Backward and forward on the ledge of rock we fought, and Hans the Unlucky stood and watched us. He could not move. He just stood and stared at us with a far-away look in his eyes.

"The Hindu tried to get his long fingers around my throat, and I tried to break his back as he worked me towards the edge of the rocky platform from which there was an eighty-foot drop to the water below. It made me sick when I thought of that drop, and I put forth every ounce of my strength. Never have I fought with a man who had such muscles. He was oily and supple, and whenever I thought I had a grip on him he would break that grip and hustle me nearer to that edge. I was in a tight corner. He was working me towards the edge of that platform, and I knew his game was to trip me and send me backwards into the thirty fathoms of water at the bottom of the rock.

"The moon peeped up out of the water, and I could see his green eyes as I fought with him—fought for my life, mind you. Inch by inch the brute pushed me backwards, and I was beginning to think up some little prayer before I was jerked into the water. I thought that if my old head hit a rocky ledge on the way down, Johann Gron-

dahl would not buy any more big pearls.

"Then, just when it looked as if everything was over, something happened. Something fell out of the inside of his shirt, and the soft light told me what that something was. It was the Virgin of Tau, and when it fell on the rocky shelf it started to roll towards the edge. It started to roll towards the edge where there was a drop of eighty feet into thirty fathoms of water!

"I went crazy when I saw that great white pearl rolling towards the edge of the platform. I was a madman! I knew that if it rolled over there it would be lost forever. I knew that the current that swept up from Devil's Point would sweep it away, and ten thousand divers would never find it again. I screamed to Peterson and to Thelma! I got my fingers on the Hindu's throat and I thrust him towards the spot where the pearl was rolling slowly, ever so slowly, towards the edge. I felt that I could fight a thousand like him.

"That big beauty got within twelve inches of the edge—within six inches, and I cursed that green-eyed brute. I took him with my two hands and I rushed him backwards; then—then I stuck out my foot and my toes closed over the Virgin of Tau! They have not nicknamed me Grondahl the Gorilla for nothing!

"The Hindu knew what I had done. His green eyes saw what I had done with my toes, and he came back at me like a wild-cat. Standing on one leg, I fought him. I was afraid to put my foot on the ground lest I might hurt the skin of the pearl on the rock. It was more precious to me than anything in the world, and standing on one leg I tried to beat off the Hindu's rushes as I screamed to Peterson to help me.

"'Peterson!' I screamed. 'Peterson! Take the pearl that I have grabbed with my toes!'

"But Peterson was a stone man. He just stood there with his eyes fixed on space, and I fought that devil as I hopped on one leg. And that Hindu was madder than ever then. His temper was up, and he was determined to push me off that platform of rock.

"I was filled with fear that he would do it. I did not want to die just then. I wanted to see the pearl again, to see if it was as wonderful as I thought it on that morning in the cabin.

"I screamed again, and Thelma answered me.

"Quick!" I cried. "I have the pearl!"

"The girl had scrambled after me up the slope from the spot where I had left her. She was a brave girl. She was a wise girl, too. She dashed on to that platform and I did not have to tell her where the pearl was. She knew I was called Grondahl the Gorilla, and when she saw me hopping on one leg she knew. She dropped on her knees and held out her hands, and I dropped the Virgin of Tau into them. She was a great girl.

"Look out," I cried. "Look out!"

"That Hindu broke from me when his green eyes caught sight of the pearl dropping into the hands of Peterson's daughter. He made a rush at her. And that rush gave me the little opportunity I was after. I drew back and smashed him one on the jaw as he turned from me, and that smash settled him. He went backward over the ledge and I staggered back against the wall of rock as I heard him strike the water eighty feet below.

"I was exhausted. I propped myself against the rock and I watched Thelma hold the big pearl before the eyes of her father. And the sight of it brought Peterson to his senses. That far-away look left his eyes, and he took hold of the girl's hands and kissed them again and again.

"My little daughter has brought it to me again!" he cried. "My little Thelma

has given it back to me after it was taken away!"

"That is the story of the Virgin of Tau. We never saw the Hindu again. He might have swum ashore but I did not take the trouble to inquire. He had given me the fight of my life, and I was not inclined to trouble much about him.

"Peterson sold me the pearl. Thelma brought it to me the next day, and I paid Hans the Unlucky seven and a half thousand dollars for it. I took it down to Brisbane and sold it there with a profit of four thousand dollars, and I cried when I parted with it. I, Johann Grondahl, cried, and I am not a person to cry over little things.

"It was a wonderful pearl. It was alive! In all my experiences I have never seen a pearl that had a skin like it, and the Almighty was kind to Hans the Unlucky when He let him get it back from that place where he had hidden it. It taught Peterson a lesson: when the good God gives you a thing, He gives it to you for some purpose, and it is not wise to hide it away lest something might fall on your head and make you forget the hiding place."

Lawton gave a soft whistle of astonishment as the pearl buyer finished his narrative. Grondahl thrust his leg out from the hammock, and the wonderful toes that had held the Virgin of Tau gripped the stem of a wine-glass and brought it towards the German's outstretched hand.

"It is late," said Grondahl. "I will have this one drink and then I will go to bed. And I know I will dream of the big pearl to-night. I am sure I will. I am sorry I sold it."



IS THERE ANY BIGGER
BUSINESS THAN MARRIAGE?

A Busy Man's Wife

By EDWIN
L. SABIN



"Oh,"
she
gasped.
"Let
me go!
How
dare
you!"

Illustrated
by
Edmund
Frederick

LET us regard little Mrs. Brown as she hastened from the kitchen to the front hall, summoned thither by the brisk, even brusque, entrance of Mr. Brown. She had responded in a pretty apron, shoulder-strapped after the latest cereal maid pattern, for although six years married she had not yet been wholly discouraged.

"Hello."

Mr. Brown kissed her—he could not help *that*.

"Dinner about ready?"

"I can have it ready in just a moment, George," intoned little Mrs. Brown. "Are you *very* hungry?"

"No, not especially; but I'm in a great hurry," answered George, on his way to the bath-room to wash.

Whereupon Mrs. Brown also must

hurry; and in a fine state of anxiety to please she coaxed oven and plates.

The dinner and flushed little Mrs. Brown together—or separately—would have tempted an anchorite. George only apportioned meat and potato, and squared away.

"Don't you want a biscuit? I made them for you," reminded Mrs. Brown.

"Yes. Thanks. Very good," pronounced George.

"Are you going down-town to-night?"

"Must. I'll have just time to glance at the paper; then I must jump."

"I should think you could stay home some evenings, George."

"I do, don't I?" defended George.

"Let's see. Wasn't I at home with you all of Monday—no, of Tuesday evening?"

"Yes; but you stayed only because we had callers."

"Well, I can't help it," assured George, decisively. He pushed back from the table. "There are a couple of men I must see at the hotel."

"And last night it was a committee meeting of some sort and to-morrow night is lodge night," complained little Mrs. Brown. "Don't you ever like to be alone with me?" And then, "You used to," she reminded, with that stock petition of the neglected, either real or fancied.

"Unfortunately, we can't live on sentiment, my dear girl," pronounced George, seeking his paper. "You must read and amuse yourself some way. If you're afraid, I'll get somebody to stay with you."

"I don't know who," retorted little Mrs. Brown, defiantly. "But I'm not afraid—not at all."

"I'd take you with with me if I could," vouchsafed George, with the sarcasm proper to the occasion. "But that's hardly practicable, you understand. So for the time being I don't see but that I'll have to meet my various engagements, for the sake of business, and you'll have to make the best of it."

"I do—don't I?" replied little Mrs. Brown, wistfully.

George had been gone about fifteen minutes (she scarcely had settled to some cross-stitching) when the telephone rang. It was Mrs. Robinson, in the next block, to announce that she and her husband and brother were coming over for a call, if that would be agreeable.

"I'm here all alone," explained little Mrs. Brown. "George had to go down town, on an engagement—"

"I'll tell you, then," proposed Mrs. Robinson: "You come over here. Let me send Neil for you" (Neil was her brother) "and we'll all have a game of cards or something or other, and we'll get you back again safe."

Little Mrs. Brown protested, rather feebly; they should make the call anyway—George would be home before very late; but Mrs. Robinson promptly overruled all counter suggestions, and little Mrs. Brown yielded not unready. Of Mrs. Robinson she was somewhat in awe and somewhat envious; for the Rob-

insons were active, thoroughly alive, and as a family congenial.

She knew Mrs. Robinson, by the extent of a reception or two and exchange of calls; she had met the bachelor brother—a strapping big fellow of the blond type, who lived in the house; as to Mr. Robinson she was a bit hazy, although George knew him.

When, under escort of Mrs. Robinson's brother Neil, she stepped through the front doorway of her own house, she had an absurdly guilty feeling. It seemed to her that she was deserting something or somebody; yes, as if she were doing a wrong act. But why should she not amuse herself, or be amused, while waiting for George, who was amusing himself?

Mrs. Robinson welcomed her with open arms.

"How glad I am we 'phoned!" she exclaimed. "We've been wanting to call for ever so long, but we never all were ready at once, until to-night. So I said to Frank, 'Let's go over to the Brown's,' and we 'phoned to make certain that you weren't going out. We're sorry to miss Mr. Brown; but to think of your being booked for an evening alone!"

"Yes, indeed," chimed in Mr. Robinson, "this is the better plan. Just the sensation of being alone in a house is peculiar. A house needs its people. Are you often alone evenings, Mrs. Brown?"

"Oh, occasionally," admitted little Mrs. Brown. "When George has business down town. But I don't mind."

"I do. It's ghastly for me," said Mrs. Robinson. "Hereafter when you are to be left alone, just telephone over here."

The evening passed rapidly. Four more persons chanced in, so that there were two tables of cards. Much to little Mrs. Brown's astonishment, the clock jumped, at a bound, from nine to eleven.

She uttered a word of dismay.

"I had no idea that it was so late. If George is home, what will he think? I must telephone right away."

"Tell him to come over," bade Mrs. Robinson.

"I ought to have left a note for him," murmured little Mrs. Brown, as she hastened to the 'phone.



"Well, I can't help it," assured George decisively. "There are a couple of men I must see at the hotel."

However, George did not answer. Evidently he had not arrived as yet.

"I can't get him. Nobody responds," reported flushed little Mrs. Brown, to the expectant company. "But I ought to go home. I'm sure I ought—"

She had invited a chorus of expostulations; they all seemed to think the hour early.

"We never stop before midnight," they asserted.

But Mrs. Brown was firm if flustered; and home would she go—Mrs. Robinson's brother, despite her protests that she was not a whit afraid, conveying her with all the *éclat* of a battle-ship conveying a gunboat.

Again she had that odd guilty feeling of being on an escapade. To her horror, George was home. As soon as she had crossed the threshold she saw his overcoat hanging from the rack; and besides, the light was turned up.

"He's here, is he?" remarked her escort, to her exclamation. "Shall I wait, until you find out for sure?"

"Oh, no; please don't," she begged; and then, ashamed of her emphasis, she quickly added: "It isn't necessary, thank you. He must be here, upstairs."

Extinguishing the hall light, she softly entered the sleeping chamber occupied by them both. George was in bed. She began to undress quietly, when he spoke.

"Light up, if you want to," he said.

"Hello, dear," she answered. "I thought that maybe you were asleep. I've been over to Mrs. Robinson's. She sent for me. How long have you been home?"

"About an hour."

"Didn't you hear me 'phone? I tried and tried to get you. I thought you'd be worried."

"I was rather surprised when I came in and you weren't here," he informed, shortly. "But I could tell that you'd gone out."

Something in his tone abashed her. She endeavored to chat on, describing to him the events of the evening; but it all sounded like idle prattle. George's replies were brief. Perhaps he was sleepy; and perhaps he did not care. She hoped that he did not.

Nothing more was said, during the

next day, of the night's events. Little Mrs. Brown imagined a certain strained suavity on George's part; yet, she had done nothing wrong, had she? His apparent attitude nettled her; but she would not defend herself until defense was required.

Anyway, for this evening she prepared an especially good dinner of things that he liked best, including mince pie. It was rather late in the season for mince pie, but it was never too late where George was concerned.

He ate as a matter of fact, without the comment that was to be her reward. When after the dishes had been cleared away she entered the sitting-room, he had read the paper and was putting on his light overcoat.

"Oh? You *are* going out?" she asked, startled in spite of herself.

"Certainly." He uttered it with a curious, cold defiance. "I've got to. This is lodge night."

"I see," she faltered. "I suppose you must, then."

"Don't sit up for me." She thought his tone slightly sarcastic. "Good-night."

"Good-night, dear."

He left little Mrs. Brown considerably disturbed. She could not understand his view-point—and she resolved that she would not try to. "Men must work and women must wait," seemed to be his principle. Probably he assumed that if he paid her bills and she kept house for him so that he would have a place wherein to sleep and eat, this was sufficient to round out the marriage contract.

In the outset he had said that his evenings down-town were a hardship; but he didn't say that any more. To spend them down-town was a habit which he assumed as a right, and as a pleasure. His few evenings at home were the hardship. Well, what did he expect her to do? Mark time?

She did not telephone the Robinson's; of course not. But when she had rebelliously seated herself for a routine evening she was heartily glad to hear a machine stop before the house, and to have the bell ring.

It was Neil Robinson, the stalwart blond.

"Good evening," he said blithely. "Mr. Brown home?"

"No. Mr. Brown had to go downtown."

"Pshaw!" deplored the blond bachelor. "We thought we'd take you both out for a ride. Suppose you can come anyway, can't you?"

"Do come," from the depths of the impatient car called Mrs. Robinson's voice.

Little Mrs. Brown did not hesitate.

"Why—yes, I'd love to," she said.

"Will you wait till I put on my coat?"

"We'll wait till you put on a party gown, if necessary," replied the gallant Mr. Neil.

Little Mrs. Brown flew upstairs, for one hurried touch to her hair and one hurried touch to her nose; she slipped on her long coat, and emerged tying her veil.

Mr. Neil was still at the door.

"Did I keep you waiting much?" she queried, anxiously.

"I should say not," he assured. "Mr. Brown is a lucky man. He never missed an act or a train, because of you, I'll wager."

No, he never had; and it was nice to be appreciated by outsiders. The appreciation put little Mrs. Brown in quite a glow of satisfaction.

The ride proved enchanting. Mrs. Robinson was full of congratulations that they had come around so opportunely. They would have been glad to have Mr. Brown, too—but how glad they were to have her, at any rate! It would have been a pity had she spent the evening just by herself. This matter had been pretty well threshed over, the night before; and the topic was not new, to little Mrs. Brown, at least. She would not allow them to think less of George; but she agreed, politely, that the program was superior to her customary program.

"Your husband must be a very busy man," remarked Mr. Robinson.

"He is; and he has constant engagements out of regular business hours," she explained, carefully.

"Well, my idea is that when a man closes his desk at five o'clock, he shouldn't think of it again until eight the next morning," vouchsafed Mr. Robinson.

"Dear, perhaps Mr. Brown must manage differently," cautioned Mrs. Robinson, smoothly.

"No doubt," hastily yielded her husband.

"As long as Mr. Brown doesn't make his wife go down to this after-dinner business, we sha'n't complain," laughed Mr. Neil from the front seat.

"Oh, we'll look out for her," declared Mrs. Robinson genially.

That was very cordial; and all that little Mrs. Brown could find to say was that she did not intend to be a burden to them. Whereat they laughed in derision.

Although glorious, the ride was all too short. She must herself cut it short, even to eliminating a stop at an ice-cream café. She felt that she must by all hazards get home before George did; and they listened to her pleading. Mr. Robinson courteously gave the chauffeur word to return by route direct.

As they drew up before the house, she eyed it sharply. There was no token of George's presence, and she breathed a sigh of relief. Yet it was ridiculous to assume so much responsibility to him. She was doing no harm.

Mr. Neil escorted her to the door.

"All quiet along the Potomac?" he asked, casually.

"I don't think he's here," she said. And she hastened to add: "Not that it matters so greatly, but he likes to have me home when he arrives."

George was not there. She breathed freer, and quickly divested herself of coat and veil. She would sit up for a while, and be ready to receive him in wifely fashion, when he came in. It was a little hard to read, or to embroider. The ride had filled her with pleasurable, exciting thoughts. And George did not appear until ten minutes to eleven.

She went into the hall, to meet him at the threshold, and kiss him. His clothing smelled strongly of cigar smoke.

"Oh, you up still?" he asked. "What have you been doing?"

"I didn't mind waiting. The Robinsons were around and took me for a ride in their big touring car. So I haven't been home very long. I hurried, to be here when you came. They wanted to take us



She would sit up for
a while and be
ready to receive
him.

both. That's why they stopped. I wish you'd been along. We had a perfectly grand ride."

"I dare say you did," he granted, carelessly. "Anybody else?"

"Just the Robinsons—Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, and their brother."

"I see." His voice was of the uninterested kind. "Fortunately or unfortunately, I was obliged to be down-town. These joy rides don't appeal to me."

"Joy rides!" How delicious! Could it be that George was jealous?

"But aren't you glad that I went? It did no harm, did it?" And she was on the point of adding: "I'll stay at home if you wish me to," but she checked her words. Why should she say that? So "What did you do?" she hazarded.

"I? I did what I went to do: saw some men at the lodge."

He climbed the stairs. She followed. In silence they prepared for sleep.

"Good-night," she spoke, across through the darkness.

"Good-night," he grunted.

Little Mrs. Brown felt like crying; but she would not permit herself even that defensive action. No; she would not give in. She had her rights, and henceforth she would assert them. If George persisted in his course apart from her, she must follow a course apart from him. And the Robinsons surely were inoffensive diversions.

When, the next afternoon, Mrs. Robinson dropped in and invited her and George to join a neighborhood card club that met twice a week, in the evening, she accepted. At dinner George dismissed her proposal with scant courtesy, reminding her, curtly, that, as she knew, his evenings were apt to be occupied; and he rather suggested that he did not see how she could belong, either.

However, she did—especially as Mrs. Robinson had kindly engaged to supply her with means of getting back and forth whenever Mr. Brown was not able to come. Little Mrs. Brown somewhat suspected that the "means" would be Mr. Neil, a province which, she feared, might become irksome to him, good-natured though he was about escort duty.

George altered his manners and meth-

ods not an iota. In fact, he appeared almost to go down-town on purpose. As for her, she was plunged into a "whirl of gaiety"—albeit her programs were not a bit lurid and were the ordinary ones that other normal people followed right along. The Robinsons evidently had taken her up; and while at first it was embarrassing not to have George ("The Mysterious Husband" they all called him), she grew used to the lack.

Little Mrs. Brown had no idea of any change in intimacy between her and the brotherly Mr. Neil. Of that she was entirely innocent. The very thought would have been monstrous to her—until one night something did crop out that startled her.

As a matter of course, Mr. Neil commonly escorted her home; and usually there were other couples passing that way. On this night they two were alone. Something a trifle closer in the pressure of his arm within hers, something a trifle lower in the timbre of his voice, ought to have put her upon her guard. Yet she was taken all by surprise when in the shadows of the porch he deftly laid his arm about her shoulders, and with lips brushing her cheek whispered, swiftly:

"You little rogue! Do you know, I think George is a lucky man; too lucky, by Jove! He doesn't deserve it."

She shook herself free; and darting in, stood on the safe side with the door slammed between them. Her heart was thumping; her face burned hotly, but her body was cold and weak.

How had he dared! What had she done, to invite it? Had she done anything? Supposing that George were home! Could she face him? He probably had not heard; but by the very tremor of her he would know.

He was not home. Thank goodness! Would he have cared, anyway? Cared beyond the mere matter of jealous personal honor? He wasn't watching her. She would have resented it if he did watch her; but—but, she resented being left to shift for herself, too. What was expected of her? And now how was she going to help herself? With Mr. Neil—with Mr. Neil (and again her face burned furiously) she had felt sis-

terly safe; now she must quit the club, and the Robinsons. No; how could she quit? George would suspect; everybody would suspect, and wonder, and remark; she would be doubly involved. And would that rid her of Mr. Neil? She feared not. Would it not be better to ignore Mr. Neil's overt act, and continue along with her programs? She had a right to enjoyment.

She hastened to undress and bury herself under the covers, that George might not detect anything amiss in her face or her manner. When he arrived, she pretended to be sleepy.

On the nights after that, when Mr. Neil escorted her home (he and Mr. and Mrs. Robinson bluntly nullifying all her adroit evasions) she held him at arm's length, so to speak, as a clever woman may with a man; and usually she succeeded in running up the steps before him, and snapping on the porch light. This, much to his polite vexation. With the light on, she was secure.

However, this could not continue forever without a slip; and she foresaw the inevitable even while she was hoping to delay it indefinitely. Meantime, not a word of accusation or of apology had been uttered between them. The episode of that previous night was as if nonexistent. But exist it did, as she knew, and as she knew that he knew.

Two weeks had passed—and passed, she congratulated herself, without more complications. She caught Mr. Neil eyeing her, on occasion, meditatively and quizzically. Great blond fellow, what a favorite he was, with both men and women! What a pity that he had spoiled the pleasant and harmless companionship which she really had valued highly! He should have been wiser. Still, she was wiser at any rate, so the lesson had not been wholly lost.

Yet almost even while she was feeling well grounded in cleverness, that very night the inevitable happened. She had attempted to reach the door ahead of him; but with a sudden spring and laugh he had beaten her easily; and when she darted out her hand for the electric switch-button he held it—and her—fast.

"Not this time, my lady," he said, low and fast, as he had said before. "I won't always be left at the post. I've been a pretty good boy, I think, but you don't play fair. Now I've got you. Where's the key?"

She could scarcely speak. Wrath choked her. She struggled and panted.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Let me go. How dare you? Don't touch me! I'll call! I'll call!"

He was too strong for her, and held her helpless, as he laughed.

"That's it; call George," he bade, mocking. "Make it a long-distance, and you can pay the toll to me."

"You coward!" she panted, wrestling hard.

From the far end of the porch, veiled in the darkness of the vines, there was an abrupt thump of feet; with a spring, another figure had traversed the porch length, and even in the instant of their recoiling apart had found the switch and snapped it. The light flooded them all: she, and Mr. Neil, and George himself.

She ran to George. It was an interesting tableau for any neighbors, but she did not mind. She wanted George, at any cost. He appeared not to see her, but he passed his arm about her, while she clung to him, sobbing with fright and relief. Above her she felt the mutual glare of two angry men, each striving to out-look the other.

"What's the game?" queried Mr. Neil. She shuddered. He had suspicions of a concerted plan. How could he!

"The game is this," crisply answered George. "You wait till I can put my wife in the house, and I'll throw you into the street."

"You will?" Mr. Neil seemed to revolve the reply. "That would be quick work. But don't be a fool, Brown. Mrs. Brown was not to blame. I'm not to blame. You're to blame. What kind of a man are you, anyway? Why don't you look after your wife, as long as you've married one?"

"That's none of your business, sir."

"It's been made some of my business—and a very pleasant business, too; the most agreeable proxy duty that ever fell



She caught Mr. Neil eyeing her meditatively and quizzically.

to my lot. Now I apologize to Mrs. Brown. I am sorry indeed to have caused her annoyance—but I'm only human. I don't apologize to you, sir, not a word or a syllable. You have put her, and me, in a humiliating position, and if apology is due it is due from you. Good-night. You can find me, whenever you are ready. Mrs. Brown you've got. Good-night, Mrs. Brown."

She knew that he had lifted his hat; and she heard him steadily descend the steps. George released her.

"I have a key," he said—his voice under control. "I'd lain down in the hammock, and must have dropped to sleep. Your voice awakened me."

They entered. He closed the door. She would have preferred to sink into the nearest chair and cry. But she faced him resolutely. He eyed her gravely.

"I wasn't spying," he proffered.

"I know you weren't. Do you blame him, or me, or what? Say it now. Say what you have to say, and I'll say what I have to say."

"Blame?" As in a daze, his eyes upon hers, he repeated the word. "Blame? No; not you—not you. Nor him, I guess. He rather hit the nail on the head. Here—don't cry." With a step he upheld her; her face was buried in his shoulder. The familiar odor of the tobacco smoke was as incense to her. She loved him, she loved him; and she had tried so very hard!

"Don't cry, dearie," he was saying. "I'm to blame. I see it now. I'm criminally liable." Slowly his grasp tightened, in emphasis. "I knew I was dead wrong about the whole wretched matter, but I was too darned contrary to give in. Shucks! If you'd been a different woman I might have lost out. Thank God, you weren't a different woman. I'm to be a different man. That sounds stagey, but I mean it. I think I've waked up. I might have killed that chap, I was so mad—and why? Because I'd been a fool, a one-sided fool! Business? I don't see any bigger business than marriage, at present. God grant I'm not too late to make a success of it. Am I?"

"N-no-o," she murmured, shaking her head.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF THE NEW CHESTER NOVEL "THE BALL OF FIRE"

BIG" is what George Randolph Chester calls this new novel. It deals with "big" men and "big" situations and with what is more unusual in fiction, a girl as "big" as they. And she is a refreshing change from the women so often pictured as strong enough to sway men and affairs—nothing of the siren, nor of the plotter, nor of the vampire.

Gail Sargent is a brown-eyed glory of a girl from a small inland city, who uses those eyes to see and not to be seen, and who has a way of asking disquieting questions and making pointed comments. She walks into the story and a vestry meeting of the wealthy Market Square Church, New York, where her Uncle Jim Sargent and seven other millionaire vestrymen are haggling over a fifty-million-dollar deal with Edward E. Allison, controller of the New York municipal transportation interests. The church wants fifty millions for its Vedder Court tenement property, which Allison is anxious to buy for traction terminals. Gail listens to the dickering with her eyes dancing.

"You haven't said how you like our famous old church," says the Rev. Smith Boyd, the handsome young rector, at the end of the meeting.

"It seems to be a remarkably lucrative enterprise," smiles Gail.

The Rev. Smith Boyd fixes on her a cold stare. The cheeks of the girl flame and she answers his silent rebuke by turning deliberately from him to the church's big stained-glass transept window. This window portrays Christ turning the money-changers out of the temple. Allison hears and his eyes twinkle. He presses Gail to let him drive her home.

"I'm curious to know the commercial value of a sunset in New York," laughs the girl as they drive. Allison looks with keener interest at her sparkling eyes and softly waving hair, because as they talk he begins to "feel the same respect for her mental processes which he would for a man's." He indulges in the weakness of bragging—tells her he has worked his way to the summit of a splendid achievement and has decided to rest.

"Why?" asks the girl. Of a sudden he feels like a pricked bubble. Why

indeed should a man of his ability stop? And he decides to achieve something that will command her respect.

At a bob-sled party the next evening in Jersey, the Rev. Smith Boyd tells Allison his church still sticks for the fifty million. "Business is business," he adds.

"By George, you're right," says Allison. "I've tried to handle you like a church, but now I'm going after you like the business organization that you are." Then Allison turns to Jim Sargent and explains that since he has built up the city's traction lines he is ambitious to do bigger things.

"What do you want to conquer next?" asks Sargent. Allison looks at Gail Sargent glowing like a sprite as she whizzes by on a sled.

"The world," he says.

He draws across a map of the United States, lines indicating railroads which, connected, would make the most direct route from New York to San Francisco—then proceeds to buy those roads. He calls in old Tim Corman, political boss, and arranges for condemnation of the Vedder Court tenements.

"And I think," says Allison, "we'd better build that Crescent Island subway immediately, and make it a double-deck, eight-track tube."

"You got a hen on," deduces Tim shrewdly, because this subway would be the only crack through which a railroad could get into the heart of New York City.

Allison's master-stroke is to have his railroad and street transportation depot all in one big building in Vedder Court, so travelers may step off a train onto an "L," or into a subway.

Meanwhile he sends violets to Gail and calls on her after a flying trip West. Howard Clemmens, a home-city suitor, is with her. Her cousin, Lucile Teasdale, Ted Teasdale and some other showy society people call also. The handsome Rev. Smith Boyd has been there, but has departed after seeing Clemmens, in greeting Gail, gather her in his arms and kiss her. Clemmens, jealous of Gail's surroundings, begs her to marry at once. She refuses, for she suddenly realizes her interests are in the powerful men she is beginning to know in the city.



THE FIRST NOVEL by
the CREATOR of
"WALLINGFORD"
in COLLABORA-
TION WITH
HIS WIFE

The Ball of Fire

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER
and LILLIAN CHESTER

Illustrated By
M. Leone Bracker

CHAPTER IX The Mine for the Golden Altar

V EDDER COURT was a very drunkard among tenement groups. Its decrepit old wooden buildings, as if weakened from dissipation and senile decay, leaned against each other crookedly for support, and leered down at the sodden swarms beneath out of broken-paned windows, which gave somehow a ludicrous effect of bleared eyes. A heartless civic impulse had once burdened them with fire escapes, and these, though they were comparatively new, had already partaken of the general decay, and looked, with their motley clattering of old bedding and nondescript garments hung out to dry, as if they were a sort of foul, fungoid growth which had taken root from the uncleanness within.

There had once been a narrow strip of curbed soil in the center of the street, where three long-since departed trees had given the quarter its name of "Court." But this space was now as bare and dry as the cobbles surrounding it, and, as it was too small even for the purposes of children at play, a wooden bench, upon which no one ever sat—as indeed, why should they?—had long ago been placed on it, to become loose-jointed and weather-splintered, like all the rest of the neighborhood.

As for its tenants, they were exactly the sort of birds one might expect to find in such nests. They were of many nations, but of just two varieties: stupid and squalid, or thin and furtive; also they were all dirty, and they bore, in their complexions, the poison of crowded breathing spaces, and bad sewerage, and unwholesome or insufficient food.

Into this mire, on a day when melting snow had fallen and made all underfoot a black, shining, oily, sticky canal, there drove an utterly out-of-place little electric coupé, set low, and its glistening, plate-glass windows hung with absurd little lace curtains held back by pink ribbon bows. At the wheel was the fresh-cheeked Gail Sargent, in a driving suit and hat and veil of brown, and with her was the twinkling-eyed vestryman of Market Square Church, Rufus Manning, whose white beard rippled down to his second waistcoat button.

They drove slowly the length of the court and back again, the girl studying every detail with acute interest. They stopped in front of Temple Mission, which, with its ugly red and blue lettering, nearly erased by years of monthly scrubblings, occupied an old store room once used as a saloon.

"So this is the chrysalis from which the butterfly cathedral is to emerge," commented Gail, as Manning held the door open for her; and before she rose she peered again around the uninviting "court," which not even the bright winter sunshine could relieve of its dinginess; rather, the sun made it only the more dismal by presenting the ugliness more in detail.

"This is the mine which produces the gold which is to gild the altar," assented Manning, studying the sidewalk. "I don't think you'd better alight here. You'll spoil your shoes."

"I want to see it all this time, because I'm never coming back," insisted Gail, and placed one daintily shod foot on the step.

"Then I'll have to shame Sir Walter Raleigh," laughed the silvery-bearded Manning, and, to Gail's gasping surprise, he caught her around the waist and lifted her across to the door, whereat several soiled urchins laughed.

There was no one in the mission except a broad-shouldered man with a roughly hewn face, who ducked his head at Manning, and touched his forefinger to the side of his head. He was placing huge soup kettles in their holes in the counter at the rear of the room, and Manning called attention to this.

"A practical mission," he explained. "We start in by saving the bodies."

"Do you get any further?" inquired Gail, glancing from the empty benches and the atrociously colored "religious" pictures on the walls, to the windows, past which eddied a mass of humanity all but submerged in hopelessness.

"Sometimes," replied Manning gravely. "I have seen a soul or two even here. It is because of these two or three possibilities that the mission is kept up. It might interest you to know that Market Square Church spends fifteen thousand dollars a year for charity relief in Vedder Court alone."

Gail's eyelids closed for an instant, and the corners of her lips twitched.

"And how much a year does Market Square Church take out of Vedder Court?"

"I was waiting for that bit of impertinence," laughed Manning. "I shall be surprised at nothing you say since that first day when you characterized Market Square Church as a remarkably lucrative enterprise. Have you never felt any compunctions of conscience over that?"

"Not once," answered Gail promptly. She had started to seat herself on one of the empty benches, but had changed her mind. "If I had been given to any such self-injustice, however, I should reproach myself now. I think Market Square Church not only commercial but criminal."

"I'll have to give your soul a chastisement," smiled Manning. "These people must live somewhere, and because Vedder Court, being church property, is exempt from taxation, they find cheaper rents here than anywhere in the city. If we were to put up improved buildings, I don't know where our tenants would go, because we would be compelled to charge more rent."

"In order to make the same rate of profit!" retorted Gail. "Out of all this misery, Market Square Church is reaping a harvest rich enough to build a countless-million-dollar cathedral, and I have sufficient disregard for the particular Deity under whom you do business, to feel sure that he would not destroy it by lightning. I want out of here."

"Frankly, so do I," admitted Manning; "although I'm ashamed of myself. It's all right for you, who are young, to be fastidious, but your Daddy Manning is coward enough to want to make his peace with Heaven, after a life which put a few blots on the book."

She looked at him speculatively for a moment, and then she laughed.

"You know, I don't believe that, Daddy Manning. You're an old fraud, who does good by stealth in order to gain the reputation of having been picturesquely wicked. Tell me why you belong to Market Square Church."

"Because it's so respectable," he twinkled down on her. "When an old sinner has lost every other claim to respectability, he has himself put on the vestry."

He dropped behind on their way to the door, surreptitiously to slip something, which looked like money, to the man with the roughly hewn countenance; and as he stood talking, the Reverend Smith Boyd came in, not quite breathlessly, but much as if he had hurried.

"I knew you were here," he said, taking Gail's slender hand in his own; then his eyes turned cold.

"You recognized my pink ribbon bows!" And she laughed up at him frankly. "You haven't been over to sing, lately."

"No," he replied, seemingly blunt, because he could not say that he had been too busy.

"Why?"—this, innocently round-eyed.

Even bluntness could not save him here.

"Will you be at home this evening?" he evaded. Still with restraint.

"I'll have our music selected."

Simple little conversation; quite trivial indeed, but it had been attended by much shifting thought. To begin with, the Rector regretted the necessity of disapproving of a young woman so undeniably attractive. She was a pleasure to the eye and a stimulus to the mind, and always his first impulse when he thought of her was one of pleasure; but in the very moment of taking her hand, he saw again that picture of Gail clasped in the arms of the impulsive young man

from home. That picture had made it distasteful for him to call and sing. He had *not* been too busy!

Another incident flashed back to him: the night of the toboggan party, when she had stood with her face upturned, and with the moonlight gleaming on her round, white throat! He had trembled, much to his later sorrow, as he fastened the scarf about her warm neck!

However, she was the visiting niece of one of his vestrymen, who lived next door to the rectory. She was particularly charming in this outfit of brown, which so much enhanced her rich tints.

Gail jerked her pretty head impatiently. If the Reverend Smith Boyd meant to be as somber as this, she'd rather he'd stay at home. He was dreadfully gloomy at times—though she was compelled to admit that he was good-looking, in a manly sort of way, and had a glorious voice and a stimulating mind. She invariably recalled him with pleasure, but something about him aggravated her so. However, he was the Rector, and her Uncle Jim was a vestryman, and they lived right next door.

"You just escaped a blowing up, Doctor Boyd," observed Daddy Manning, joining them, when they stood just inside the door, and his eyes twinkled from one to the other. "Our young friend from the West is harsh with the venerable Market Square Church."

"Again?" And the Reverend Smith Boyd was gracious enough to smile. "What is the matter with it this time?"

"It is not only commercial, but criminal," repeated Manning, with a sly smile at Gail, who now wore a little red spot in each cheek.

"In what way?" The Rector turned to Gail severely.

"The mere fact that your question needs an answer is sufficient indication of the callousness of everyone connected with Market Square Church," she promptly informed him. "That a church should permit a blemish like this to exist, when it has the power to obliterate it, is unbelievable, but that it should make money from the condition is infamous!"

The Reverend Smith Boyd's cold eyes

turned green. In offending the dignity of Market Square Church she offended his own.

"What would you have us do?" he quietly asked.

"Retire from business," she informed him, nettled by the covert sneer at her youth and inexperience. She laid aside a new perplexity for future solution. In moments such as this the Rector was far from ministerial, and he displayed a quickness to anger quite out of proportion to the apparent cause. "The whole trouble with Market Square Church, and the churches throughout the world, is that they have no God. The Creator has been reduced to a formula!"

Daddy Manning saved the Rector the pain of any answer.

"You're a religious anarchist," he charged Gail.

Her face softened.

"By no means," she replied. "I am a devoted follower of the Divine Spirit, the Divine Will, the Divine Law; but not of the church, for it has forgotten these things."

"You don't know what you are saying," the Rector told her.

"That isn't all you mean," she retorted. "What you have in your mind is that, being a woman, and young, I should be silent. You would not permit thought if you could avoid it, for when people begin to think, religion lives but the Church dies, as it is doing to-day."

Now the Reverend Smith Boyd could be triumphant. There was a curl of sarcasm on his lips.

"Are you quite consistent?" he charged. "You have just been objecting to the prosperity of the Church."

"Financially," she admitted; "but it is a spiritual bankrupt. Your financial prosperity is a direct sign of your religious decay. Your financial bankruptcy will come later, as it has done in France, as it is doing in Italy, as it will do all over the world. Humanity treats the church with the generosity due a once valuable servant which has outlived its usefulness."

"My dear child, humanity can never do without religion," interposed Daddy Manning.

"Agreed," said Gail, "but it outgrows the styles in religion. It outgrew idolatry. Now, in its progress toward morality, it is outgrowing creed. What we need is a new religion."

"You are blaming the church with a fault which lies in the people," protested the Rector, shocked and disturbed, and yet feeling it his duty to set Gail right. He was ashamed of himself for having been severe with her in his mind. She was less frivolous than he had thought, and what she needed was spiritual instruction. "The people are luke-warm."

"What else could they be with the watery spiritual food which the church provides?" retorted Gail. "You feed us discarded bugaboos, outworn tenets, meaningless forms and ceremonies. All the rest of the world progresses, but the church almost stands still. Once in a decade some sect patches its creed, and thinks it has been revolutionary—when in fact it has only caught up with a point which was passed by humanity at large, in its advancing intelligence, fifty years before."

"I am interested in knowing what your particular new religion would be like," remarked Daddy Manning, his twinkling eyes resting affectionately on Gail.

"It would be a return to the simple worship of God," Gail told him reverently. "It is still in the hearts of the people, and it will always be; but they have nowhere to gather together and worship."

Daddy Manning laughed as he detected that bit of sarcasm.

"According to that, we're wasting our new cathedral."

"Absolutely!" And it struck the Rector with pain that Gail had never looked more beautiful than now, with her cheeks flushed and her brown eyes snapping with indignation. "Your cathedral will be a monument—built out of profits wrung from squalor—to the vanity of your congregation. If I were the dictator of this wonderful city of achievement, I would decree that cathedral never to be built, and Vedder Court to be utterly destroyed."

"It is perhaps just as well that you are not the dictator of the city." The



"Why do you suppose I am so eager for the building, on American soil, of the most magnificent house of worship in the world?" he demanded. Gail's pretty upper lip curled. "Personal ambition!" she snapped, and did not wait to see the pallor which struck his face to stone.

young Reverend Smith Boyd gazed down at her from his six feet of serious purpose with all his previous disapproval intensified. "The history of Market Square Church is rich with instances of its usefulness in both the spiritual and the material world, with evidence of its power for good, with justification for its existence, with reason for its acts. You make the common mistake of judging an entire body from some surface indication. Do you suppose there is no sincerity, no conscience, no consecration in Market Square Church?" His deep, mellow baritone vibrated, with the depth of his purpose and that of the institution which he represented. "Why do you suppose our vestrymen, whose time is of enormous value, find a space amid their busy working hours for the affairs of Market Square Church? Why do you suppose the ladies of our guild, who have agreeable pursuits for every hour of the day, give their time to committee and charity work?" He paused for a hesitant moment. "Why do you suppose I am so eager for the building, on American soil, of the most magnificent house of worship in the world?"

Gail's pretty upper lip curled.

"Personal ambition!" she snapped, and, without waiting to see the pallor which struck his face to stone, she heeled her way out the door and through the mud to her coupé.

CHAPTER X

The Storm Center of Magnetic Attraction

GAIL SARGENT fairly scintillated with enjoyment. She had never attended so brilliant a house-party as this one given by Lucile Teasdale. Her own set, back home, had a lot of fun, but this was in some way different. The people were no more clever, but there were more clever people among them; that was it. There had been a wider range from which to pick—which was why, in New York, there were so many circles, and circles within circles.

Gail was sparkling all the time. There was a constant flash of wit, not of a very classic order, to be sure, nor excep-

tionally brilliant; but this latter is the chief trouble with some wit. It must be taken so seriously. There were dashes into the brisk, exhilarating winter air; there were lazy breakfasts, where three or four of the girls grouped in one room; there was endless gaiety and laughter, and, above all, oceans and oceans of flirtation. The men whom Lucile and Arly Fosland had collected were an especial joy. They had all the accomplished outward symbols of fervor without any of its oppressive insistence. Gail, as an agreeable duty to her new found self, experimented with several of them, and found them most amusing and pleasant, but nothing more disturbing.

Dick Rodley was the most persistent, and, in spite of the fact that he was so flawlessly handsome as almost to excite ridicule, Gail found herself, by and by, defending him against her own iconoclastic sense of humor. He reached her after the impromptu minstrel show, while Houston Van Ploon and Willis Cunningham were still struggling profanely with their burnt cork, and he stole her from under the very eyes of Jack Lariby, while that smitten youth was exchanging wit, at a tremendous loss, with caustic Arly Fosland.

"Have you seen the new century plant in the conservatory?" Dick asked, his black eyes glowing down at her like coals.

Gail's eyelids dropped for an instant, and the corners of her lips twitched. Young Lariby had only been with her five minutes, but she had felt herself aging in that time.

"I love them," she avowed, and glancing backward just once, she tiptoed hastily away with the delighted Dick. That young man had looked deep into the eyes of many women, and at last he was weary of being adored.

"I've missed you so this evening," he earnestly confided to her. "I was two hours in the minstrel show. It was forever, Gail!" And he bent his glowing eyes upon her. That was it! His wonderful eyes! They were magnetic, compelling, and one would be dull who could not find a response to the thrill of them.

"Where is the century plant?"

"There is no century plant," he shamelessly confessed.

"I knew it,"—and she laughed.

"I don't mind admitting that it was a point-blank lie," he cheerfully told her.

"I wanted to get you out here alone, all to myself." His voice went down two tones. He did it so prettily!

"I've counted seven couples," she responded gaily.

He tightened his arm where her hand lay on it, and she left it there.

"You've clinched Lucile's reputation," he stated. "She always has been famous for picking good ones; but she saved you for the climax."

"My happy, happy childhood days!" laughed Gail. "The boys used to talk like that on the way home from school."

"I don't doubt it,"—and Dick smiled appreciatively. "The dullest sort of a boy would find himself saying nice things to you; but I shall stop it."

"Oh, please don't!" begged Gail. "You are so delightful at it."

He pounced on a corner half hidden by a tub of ferns. There was no bench there, but it was at least semi-isolated, and he leaned against the window-ledge, looking down at her earnestly as she stood, slenderly outlined, against the green of the ferns, in her gown of delicate blue sparkling with opalescent flakes.

"That's just the trouble," he complained. "I don't wish you to be aware that I am saying what you call pretty things. I wish, instead, to be effective." There was a roughness in his voice which had come for the first time. She was a trifle startled by it, and she lowered her eyes before the steady gaze which he poured down on her. Why, he was in earnest!

"Then take me to Lucile," she smiled up at him, and strolled in toward the ballroom.

Willis Cunningham met them at the door.

"You promised me the first dance," he breathlessly informed Gail. He had been walking rapidly.

"Are they ready?" she inquired, stepping a pace away from Dick.

"Well, the musicians are coming in,"

evaded Cunningham, tucking her hand in his arm.

"I've the second one, remember, Gail,"

Dick reminded her, as he glanced around the ballroom for his own partner; but Gail distinctly felt his eyes following her as she walked away with Cunningham.

"I know now of what your profile reminds me," Cunningham told her. "—the Charmeaux 'Praying Nymph.' It is the most spiritually beautiful of all the pictures in the Louvre."

"I wonder which is the stronger emotion in me just now," she returned, "—gratified vanity or curiosity."

"I hope it's the latter," smiled Cunningham. "I recall now a gallery in which there is a very good copy of the Charmeaux canvas, and I'd be delighted to take you."

"I'll go with pleasure," promised Gail, and Cunningham turned to her with a grateful smile.

"I would prefer to show you the original," he ventured.

"Oh, look at them tuning their drums," cried Gail, and he thought that she had entirely missed his hint.

He had other things which he wanted to say, but he calculatingly reserved them for the day of the picture viewing, when he would have her exclusive attention; so, through the dance, he talked of trifles far from his heart. He was a nice chap too.

Dick Rodley was on hand with the last stroke of the music, to claim her for his dance. By one of those waves of unspoken agreement, Gail was being "rushed." It was her night, and she enjoyed it to the full. Perhaps the new awakening in her, the crystalization of which she had been forced to become conscious, had something to do with this. Her cheeks, while no more beautiful in their delicacy of coloring, had a certain quality of translucence which gave her the indefinable effect of glowing from within. Her eyes, while no brighter, had changed the manner of their brightness. They had lost something of their sparkle, which had been replaced by a peculiarly enticing, half-veiled scintillation, much as if they were smouldering, only to cast

off streams of brilliant sparks at the slightest disturbance; while all about her was the vague, intangible aura of magnetic attraction which seemed to flutter and to soothe and to call, all in one.

Dick Rodley was the first to know this vague change in her; perhaps because Dick, with all his experience in the social diversion of love-making, was, after all, more spiritual in his physical perceptions. At any rate, he hovered near her at every opportunity throughout the evening, and his own eyes, which had the natural trick of glowing, now almost blazed when they met those of Gail. She liked him, and she did not. She was thrown into a flutter of pleasure when he came near her; she enjoyed a clash of wit, and of will, and of mutual attraction; then suddenly she wanted him away from her, only to welcome him eagerly when he came back.

Van Ploon danced with her, danced conscientiously, keeping perfect time to the music, avoiding, with practiced adroitness, every possible pocketing or even hem contact with surrounding couples, and acquitting himself of lightly turned observations at the expiration of about every seventy seconds. He was aware that Gail was exceptionally pretty to-night, but, if he stopped to analyze it at all, he probably ascribed it to her delicate blue dancing frock with its opalescent flakes, or her coiffure, or something of the sort. He quite approved of her. He had never met a girl who approached so near the thousand per cent grade of perfection by all the blue ribbon points!

It was while she was enjoying her second restful dance with Van Ploon that Gail, swinging with him near the south windows, heard the honk of an auto horn, and a repetition close after, and by the acceleration of tone, she discerned that the machine was coming up the drive at break-neck speed. Moreover, her delicately attuned musical ear recognized something familiar in the sound of the horn—perhaps tone, perhaps duration, perhaps inflection, more likely a combination of all three. Consequently, she was not at all surprised when, near the conclusion of the dance,

she saw Allison standing in the doorway of the ballroom with his hands in his pockets, watching her with a smile.

Gail's eyes lighted with pleasure, and she nodded gaily to Allison over Van Ploon's tall shoulder. When the dance stopped she was on the far side of the room, and was instantly the center of a buzzing little knot of dancers, from out of which care-free laughter radiated like visible flashes of musical sound. She emerged from the group with the arms of two bright-eyed girls around her waist, and met Allison sturdily breasting the currents which had set towards the conservatory, the drawing-rooms, or the buffet.

"Nobody has saved me a dance," he complained.

"Nobody expected you until to-morrow," Gail smilingly returned, introducing him to the girls. "I'll beg you one of my dances from Ted or somebody."

She was so obviously slated to entertain Allison during this little intermission, that Van Ploon, following the trio in duty bound, took one of the girls and went away, and her partner led the other one to the music room.

"I'll have Lucile piece you out a card," offered Gail, as they strolled naturally across to the little glass-enclosed balcony. "I don't think I can get you one of Arly's dances. She's scandalously popular to-night."

"One will be enough for me, unless you can steal me some more of your own," he told her, glancing down at her, from coiffure to blue pointed slippers, with calm appreciation. "You are looking great to-night." And his gaze came back to rest in her fathomless eyes. Her fresh color had been heightened by the excitement of the evening, but now an added flush swept lightly over her cheeks.

"I'll see what I can do," she speculated, looking at her dance card. "The next three are with total strangers, and of course I can't touch those," she laughed. "The fourth one is with Willis Cunningham, and after that is a brief wilderness again. I think one is all you get."



"You are looking great to-night." And his gaze came back to rest in her fathomless eyes. Her fresh color had been heightened by the excitement of the evening, but now an added flush swept lightly over her cheeks.

"I'm lucky even to have that," declared Allison in content. "The fourth dance down. That will just give me time to punish the buffet. I'm hungry as a bear. I started here without my dinner."

Her next partner came in search of her presently, and the music struck up, and Allison, nodding jovially to acquaintances, for he was in excellent humor in these days of building and planning and clearing ground for an entirely new superstructure of life, circled around to the dining-room, where he performed savage feats at the buffet.

Soon he was out again, standing quietly at the edge of things, and watching Gail with keen pleasure, both when she danced and when, in the intermissions, the gallants of the party gravitated to her like needles to a magnet. Her popularity pleased him and flattered him. Suddenly he caught sight of Eldridge Babbitt, a middle-aged man who was watching a young woman with the same pleasure Allison was experiencing in the contemplation of Gail.

"Just the man I wanted to see," announced Allison, making his way to Babbitt. "I have a new freightage proposition for the National Dairy Products Consolidation."

Babbitt brightened visibly. He had been missing something keenly these past two days, and now all at once he realized what it was: *business!*

"I can't see any possible new angle," returned Babbitt cautiously, and with a backward glance at the dashing young Mrs. Babbitt, he headed instinctively for the library.

Laughingly Gail finished her third dance down. She had enjoyed several sparkling encounters with Dick Rodley in passing, and she was buoyantly exhilarated as she started to stroll from the floor with her partner. Together they walked through the conservatory, and the dining-room, and the deserted billiard room, with its bright light on the green cloth and all the rest of the room in dimness. There was a narrow space at one point between the chairs and the table, and it unexpectedly wedged them into close contact. With a sharp intake of his breath, the fellow, a ruddy-faced,

thick-necked, full-lipped young man who had followed her with his eyes all evening, suddenly turned, and caught her in his embrace, and, holding back her head in the hollow of his arm, kissed her—a new kiss to her, and horrible!

Suddenly he released her and stepped back abruptly, filled with remorse.

"Forgive me!" he begged.

Gail nodded numb acceptance of the apology, and, turning, hurried out of the side door to the veranda. Her knees were trembling, but the fresh, cold air steadied her, and she walked the full length of the wide porch, trying to forget the sickening humiliation.

As she came to the corner of the house, the sharp winter wind tore at her, smote her throat, clutched at her bare shoulders, and stopped her with a sharp physical command. She drew her gauzy little scarf around her, and held it tightly knotted at her throat, and edged closer to the house. She was near a window, and, advancing a step, she looked in. It was the library, and Allison sat there, so clean and wholesome looking, with his pink, shaven face and his white evening waistcoat, and his dark hair beginning to sprinkle with gray at the temples.

He was so sturdy and so strong and so dependable looking, as he sat earnestly talking with Babbitt! Allison said something, and they both smiled; then Babbitt said something and they both threw back their heads and laughed, while Allison, with one hand in his pocket, waved his other hand over a memorandum pad which lay between them. Gail hurried to the front door.

"Hello, Gail," greeted the cheery voice of Allison, as she came in. "My dance next, isn't it?"

His voice was so good, so comforting, so reassuring.

"I think so," she replied, standing hesitantly in the doorway, and thankful that the lights were canopied.

Allison drew the memorandum pad toward him, and rose.

"By the way, there's one thing I forgot to tell you, Babbitt, and it's rather important." He hesitated and glanced toward the door. "You'll excuse me just half a minute, wont you, Gail?"

She had noticed before that assumption of intimate understanding with her, and she had half admired, half resented it. Now it was a comfort and a joy.

"Surely," she granted, and passed on into the library alcove, a sheltered nook where she was glad to be alone, to rescue herself from the whirl of anger and indignation and humiliation—above all, humiliation!—which had swept around her.

What had she done to bring this deplorable experience upon herself? What evil thing had there been in her to summons forth this ugly specter? She had groped almost deliberately for that other polarity which should complete her, but this painful moment was not one of the things for which she had sought.

She could not know, but she had passed one of the inevitable milestones. The very crystallization which had brightened and whetted her to a keen zest in her natural destiny, had attracted this fellow inevitably. Her face was hot and cold by turns, and she was almost on the point of crying, in spite of her constantly reiterated self-admonishment that she must control herself here, when Allison came to the door.

"All right, Gail," he said laconically.

She felt suddenly weary, but she rose and joined him. When she slipped her hand in his arm, strong, and warm, and pulsing, she was aware of a thrill from it; but the thrill was just restfulness.

"You look a little tired," judged the practical Allison, as they strolled, side by side, into the hall; and he patted the slender hand which lay on his arm.

"Not very," she replied lightly, and unconsciously she snuggled her hand a little more comfortably into its resting place. A little sigh escaped her lips, deep-drawn and fluttering. It was a sigh of content.

CHAPTER XI

"Gentlemen, there is your empire!"

THE seven quiet gentlemen who sat with Allison at his library table followed the concluding flourish of his hand

toward the map on the wall, and either nodded or blinked appreciatively. The red line was complete now, a broad, straight stroke from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and to it were added, on either side, irregular, angling red lines like the legs of a centipede, the feeders of the various systems which were under control of the new Atlantic-Pacific Railroad.

"That's a brilliant piece of engineering, Allison," observed huge Richard Haverman, by way of pleasant comment, and he glanced admiringly at Allison, after his eye had roved around the little company of notables. The feat of bringing these seven men together at a specific hour was greater than having consolidated the brilliant new Atlantic-Pacific Railroad.

"Let's get to the details," barked a voice with the volume of a St. Bernard. It came from Arthur Grandin, the head of the Union Fuel Company, which controlled all the wood and coal in the United States, and all the oil in the world. His bald spot came exactly on a level with the back of his chair, and he wore stern eye-glasses.

"I'm putting in the Atlantic-Pacific as my share of the pool, gentlemen," explained Allison. "My project, as I have told you, is to make this the main trunk—the vertebra, as it were, of the International Transportation Company. I have consolidated with the A. P., the Municipal Transportation Company, and I have put my entire fortune in it, to lay it on the table absolutely unencumbered." He threw down the Atlantic-Pacific Railroad and the Municipal Transportation Company in the form of a one-sheet typewritten paper.

"We'd better appoint some one to look after the legal end of things," suggested the towering Haverman, whose careless, lounging attitude contrasted oddly with his dignified long beard.

"I'll take care of it," said W. T. Chisholm, of the Majestic Trust Company, and, drawing the statement in front of him, he set a paperweight on it.

"The first step is not one of incorporation," went on Allison. "Before that is done there must be but one railroad system in the United States."

Smooth-shaven old Joseph G. Clark nodded his head. There was now but one cereal company in the United States, and the Standard, in the beginning, had been the smallest. The heads of two rival concerns were now in Clark's employ, the head of another a pauper, and three were dead. He disliked the pauper.

Robert E. Taylor, of the American Textiles Company, a man who had quite disproved the theory that constructive business genius was confined to the North, smoothed his gray mustache reflectively, with the tip of his middle finger, all the way out to its long point.

"I can see where you will tear up the east and west traffic situation to a considerable extent," he thoughtfully commented, "but without the important north and south main trunks you cannot make a tight web."

Allison went over to his wall map, with a step in which there was the spring of a boy. A. L. Vance, of the United States Supplies Company, which controlled beef, sugar, and practically all other food products, except those mighty necessities under the sways of the Standard Cereal Company and Eldridge Babbitt's National Dairy Products Consolidation, studied the buoyant Allison with a puzzled expression. He had seen Allison grow to care-burdened manhood, and suddenly Ed seemed twenty years younger. Only Eldridge Babbitt knew the secret of this miraculous rejuvenescence, and Babbitt had married late in life: a beautiful young woman!

"The key to the north and south situation is here," said Allison, and he drew a firm, swift, blue line down across the United States, branching at each end. "George Dalrymple will be here in half an hour, and by that time I trust we may come to some agreement."

"It depends on what you want," boomed Arthur Grandin, who, sitting beside the immense Haverman, looked as if that giant had shrunk him by mere proximity.

"Freight, to begin with," stated Allison, resuming his place at the head of the table, but not his seat. "You gentlemen represent, by an enormous percentage, the largest freightage interests of

the United States. You all know your relative products, and yet, in order to grasp this situation completely, I wish to enumerate them. Babbitt's National Dairy Products Consolidation can swing the shipment of every ounce of butter, cream, cheese, eggs and poultry handled in this country; Clark's Standard Cereal Company, wheat, corn, oats, rice, barley, malt, flour, every ounce of bread stuffs or cereal foods grown on American soil; Haverman, the Amalgamated Metals Constructive Company, every pound of iron, lead, and copper, and every ton of ore, from the moment it leaves the ground until it appears as an iron web in a city sky; Grandin, the Union Fuel Company, coal and wood, from Alaska to Pennsylvania, with oil and all its enormous by-products; Taylor, the American Textiles Company, wool, cotton, flax, the raw and finished material of every thread of clothing we wear, or any other textile fabric we use except silk; Vance, the United States Supplies Company, meat, sugar, fruit, the main blood and sinew builders of the country. Gentlemen, give me the hauling controlled by your six companies, and I'll toss the rest of the country's freightage to a beggar."

"You forget Chisholm," Babbitt reminded him, and Banker Chisholm's white mutton-chops turned pink from the appreciation which glowed in his ruddy-veined face.

"Allison was quite right," returned big Haverman with a dry smile. "The freightage income on money is an item scarcely worth considering."

"Give the Atlantic-Pacific this freight, and, inside of two years, the entire business of the United States, with all its ramifications, will be merged in one management, and that management ours. We shall not need to absorb, nor purchase, a single railroad until it is bankrupt."

"Sensible idea, Allison," approved Clark, of the Standard Cereal Company. "It's a logical proposition which I had in mind years ago."

"Allison's stroke of genius, it seems to me, consists in getting us together," smiled big Haverman.

Banker Chisholm leaned forward on the table, and stroked his round chin reflectively.

"There would be some disorganization, and perhaps financial disorder, in the first two years," he considered; "but the railroads are already harassed too much by the government to thrive under competition, and, in the end, I believe this proposed centralization would be the best thing for the interests of the country."—wherein Chisholm displayed that he was a vestryman of Market Square Church wherever he went.

"What is your proposition?" asked Grandin, who, because of the self-assertion necessitated by his diminutive size, seemed pompous, but was not. No pompous man could have merged the wood, coal, and oil interests, and, having merged them, swung them over his own shoulder.

Allison's answer consisted of one word.

"Consolidation," he said.

There was a moment of silence, while these men absorbed that idea, and glanced speculatively, not at Allison, but at each other. They were kings, these heads of mighty corporations, whose emissaries carried their sovereignties into the furthest corners of the earth. Like friendly kings, they had helped each other in the protection of their several domains; but this was another matter.

"That's a large proposition, Ed," stated Vance, very thoughtfully. All sense of levity had gone from this meeting. They had come, as they thought, to promote a large mutual interest, but not to weld a *Frankenstein*. "I did not understand your project to be so comprehensive. I fancied your idea to be that the various companies represented here, with Chisholm as financial controller, should take a mutual interest in the support of the Atlantic-Pacific Railroad, for the purpose of consolidating the transportation interests of the country under one management, thereby serving our own needs."

"Very well put, Vance," approved Taylor, smoothing his pointed mustache.

"That is a mere logical development

of the railroad situation," returned Allison. "If I had not cemented this direct route, some one would have made the consolidation you mention within ten years; for the entire railroad situation has been disorganized since the death of three big men in that field; and the scattered holdings would be, and are, an easy prey for anyone vitally interested enough to invade the industry.

"I have no such minor proposition in mind. I propose, with the Atlantic-Pacific as a nucleus, first, as I have said, to bring the financial terminals of every mile of railroad in the United States into one central office. With this I then propose to combine the National Dairy Products Consolidation, the Standard Cereal Company, the Amalgamated Constructive Metals Company, Union Fuel, American Textiles, United States Supplies, and the stupendous financial interests swayed by the banks tributary to the Majestic Trust Company.

"I propose to weld these gigantic concerns into one corporation, which shall be the mightiest organization the world has ever known. Beginning with the control of transportation, it will control all food, all apparel, all construction materials, all fuel. From the shoes on his feet to the roof over his head, every man in the United States of America, from laborer to president, shall pay tribute to the International Transportation Company.

"Gentlemen, if I have dreamed big, it is because I am dealing with men who know only large dreams. What I propose is an empire greater than that ever swayed by any monarch in history. We eight men, who are here in this room, can build that empire with the scratch of a pen, and can hold it against the assaults of the world!"

His voice rang as he finished, and Babbitt looked at him in wonder. Allison had always been a strong man, but now, in his second youth, he was an Anteus springing fresh from the earth.

"Allison,"—it was the voice of old Joseph G. Clark, who had built the Standard Cereal Company out of one wheat elevator—"who is to be the monarch of your new empire?"



"Now will you sell?" inquired Allison. "No," said Dalrymple, again with that infinite contempt in his tone; "break me!" "All right," accepted Allison.

For just a moment Allison looked about him. Vastly different as these men were, from the full-bearded Haverman to smooth-shaven old Joseph G. Clark, there was one expression which was the same in every man—that of mastery.

These men, by the sheer force of their personality, by the sheer dominance of their wills, by the sheer virility of their purposes, by the sheer, dogged persistence which balks at no obstacle and hesitates at no foe, had fought and strangled and throttled their way to the top until they stood head and shoulders above all the strong men of their respective domains, safe from protest or dispute of sovereignty, because none had risen strong enough to do them battle. They were the undefeated champions of their classes, and the life of every man in that group was an epic!

Who was to be monarch of their new empire? Allison answered that question as simply as he had the others.

"The best man," he said.

There had been seven big men in America. Now there were eight. They all recognized that.

"Of course," went on Allison, "my proposition does not assume that any man here will begin by relinquishing control of his own particular branch of the International Transportation Company; sugar, beef, iron, steel, oil, and the other commodities will all be under their present handling; but each branch will so support and benefit the other that the position of the consolidation itself will be impregnable against competition or the assaults of government. The advantages of control, collection, and distribution are so vast that they far outweigh any possible question of personal aggrandizement."

"Don't hedge, Allison," barked Arthur Grandin. "You expressed it right in the first place. You're putting it up to us to step out of the local championship class, and contend for the big belt."

"The price isn't big enough," pronounced W. J. Chisholm, as if he had decided for them all. As befitted his calling, he was slower minded than the rest. There are few quick turns in banking.

"Not big enough?" repeated Allison. "Not big enough, when the Union Fuel Company already supplies every candle which goes into the Soudan, runs the pumps on the Nile and the motor boats on the Yang-Tse-Kiang, supplies the oil for the lubrication of the car of Jugger-naut and works the propeller of every aeroplane? Not big enough, when already the organizations represented here have driven their industries into every quarter of the earth? What shall you say when we join to our nucleus the great steamship lines and the foreign railroads? Not big enough? Look here!"

He strode over to the huge globe. From New York to San Francisco a red line had already been traced. Now he took a pencil in his hand, and placing the point at New York, gave the globe a whirl, girding it completely. "*Gentlemen, there is your empire!*"

Again the nasal voice of old Joseph G. Clark drawled into the silence.

"I suggest that we discuss in detail the conditions of the consolidation," he remarked.

The bell of Allison's house 'phone rang.

"Mr. Dalrymple, sir," said Ephraim.

"Very well," replied Allison. "Show him into the study. Babbitt, will you read to the gentlemen this skeleton plan of organization? If you'll excuse me, I'll be back in five minutes."

"Dalrymple?" inquired Taylor.

"Yes," answered Allison abstractedly, and went into the study.

He and Dalrymple looked at each other silently for a moment, with the old enmity shining between them. Dalrymple, a man five years Allison's senior, a brisk speaking man with a protruding jaw and deep-set gray eyes, had done more than any other one human being to develop the transportation systems of New York, but his gift had been in construction, in creation, whereas Allison's had been in combination; and Dalrymple had gone into the railroad business.

"Dalrymple, I'm going to give you a chance," said Allison briskly. "I want the Gulf and Great Lakes Railroad system."

Dalrymple had produced a cigar while he waited, and now he lighted it.

"I don't doubt it," he replied. "The system is almost completed."

"I'll make a fair offer for your controlling interest," went on Allison.

"And if I wont sell?"

"Then I'll jump on you to-morrow in the stock exchange and take it away from you."

Dalrymple smiled.

"You can't do it. I own my controlling interest outright, and no stock gambling can affect either a share of my stock or the earning capacity of my railroad. When you drove me out of the traction field, I took advantage of my experience and entrenched myself. Go on and gamble."

"I wish you wouldn't take that attitude," returned Allison, troubled. "It looks to you as if I were pursuing you because of that old quarrel; but I want you to know that I'm not vindictive."

"I don't think you are," replied Dalrymple, with infinite contempt. "You're just a damned hog."

A hot flush swept over Allison's face, but it was gone in an instant.

"It just happens that I need the Gulf and Great Lakes System," he went on, in a perfectly level voice, "and I prefer to buy it from you at a fair price."

Dalrymple put on his hat.

"It isn't for sale," he stated.

"Just a minute, Dalrymple," interposed Allison. "I want to show you something." And he stepped over towards the library. "Look in here." And

Dalrymple stepped to the opening and saw, not merely seven men, middle-aged and past, sitting around a library table, but practically all the freightable necessities of the United States and practically all its money, a power against which his twenty-million-dollar railroad system was of no more opposition than a toy train.

".....the transportation department to be governed by a council composed of the representatives of the various

departments herein mentioned," droned on the voice of Babbitt.

The representatives of the various other departments therein mentioned were bent in concentrated attention on every sentence and phrase and word and syllable of that important document, not omitting to pay important attention to the pauses which answered for commas; and none looked up.

Dalrymple closed the door gently and turned back.

"Now will you sell?" inquired Allison.

For a moment the two men looked into each other's eyes, while the old enmity, begun while they were still in the womb of time, lay chill between them. At one instant, Dalrymple, whose jaw muscles were working convulsively, half raised his hands, as if he were minded to fall on Allison and strangle him; and it was not the fact that Allison was probably the stronger man which restrained him, but a bigger pride.

"No," he said, again with that infinite contempt in his tone. "Break me."

"All right," accepted Allison cheerfully, and even with relief, for his way was now free to pursue its normal course.

"Dalrymple wont sell," he reported, when he rejoined his fellow-members of the International Transportation Company.

Joseph G. Clark looked up from a set of jotted memoranda which he had been nonchalantly setting down during the reading.

"We'll pick it up in the stock market," he carelessly suggested.

"Can't," replied Allison with equal carelessness. "He's entrenched with solid control, and I imagine he doesn't owe a dollar."

Chisholm, with his fingers in his white mutton-chops, was studying clean-shaven old Clark's memoranda.

"A panic will be necessary anyhow," he observed. "We'll acquire the road then."

The next installment of "The Ball of Fire" will be in the January Red Book, on all news-stands December 23rd.

INTRODUCING THAT GALLANT
SWORDSMAN, COUNT SAROS



The Immortal Passado

BY L. J. BEESTON

Author of "Pauline March," etc.

Illustrated by Frank Craig

YOUR best hour for visiting me would be between three and four in the afternoon. I do not say that I could then spare you the least possible time for a lesson; but you would be privileged to see some illustrious faces: possibly a grand duke, an arch-duke, even a royal prince, an ambassador or two, a dollar-king from America, a *blasé* English lord, a *boyar* from the Russian snows, a military officer or two from most of the capitals of Europe.

The street is, of course, a fashionable one, and a promenade. I will assume that you enter it at the cathedral end. You have admired that age-blackened fabric which contains some stalls of the knights of the Golden Fleece; you have listened to the carillon of forty-eight bells that make wild music in the three-hundred-feet-high belfry. You walk slowly down the promenade. At the other end are the horticultural gardens; on your right the ramparts; on your left low-built, antique, valuable shops. You come to a jeweler's establishment which bears the name of de la Roux (Regent Street and Fifth Avenue have nothing finer in their windows); you perceive a side door of unpretentious

appearance; a servant in quiet livery opens to you, conducts you up a single flight of ancient stairs; you pass through a doorway on your right.

You are in a large, oblong-shaped hall, with parquet flooring, un-curtained windows, containing no scrap of furniture save upholstered benches ranged around the paneled walls. Where are you?

You are in the famous *salle d'escrime*, the well-known school of fencing in the capital of Assila, a resort renowned, ultra-fashionable. Who owns it? I do. Who am I? Count Martin Valentine Saros.

I am a *maître d'escrime*. I am much more than that, really. But I am going to speak about that presently.

Now do not jump to the conclusion that because I am master of so celebrated a school for swords I must necessarily be a swordsman of superlative skill. That would be an enormous claim, believe me. No, it is with the flute, with my beloved flute, that I reveal powers of excellence. True, if you ask anyone else they will tell you the opposite: that I perform miracles with a rapier between my fingers, and that on the flute I am a wretched performer. But never credit

that statement. I know what I know.

Permit me to modify an expression. I said that I am much more than a master of the sword. But is not that profession on the heights? Hats off to the imperishable Salvator Fabris and his *contra postura*; knees bent before the name of Giganti and his guards in *carte* and *tierce*; glory undying to the great Danet and his nine terrible thrusts; as for the one and only Capo Ferro of the Italian School—why, you will hear that name sometimes on the lips of my beloved prince and master, Nicolas of Assila, concerning whom I mean to tell you strange matters, and stirring.

We salute, then, the peerless masters of rapier-play. That is understood. We salute, also, the Sword, which needed every one of the three hundred years of its evolution to perfection. It is, believe me, one of Romance's many synonyms. The countries of Europe have sheathed it—an illustrious ornament, an insignia; but there is an exception or two even in this twentieth century. France is one; and, to a still greater extent, Assila.

I am no reader. For book, give me one of those long strips of steel "of the ice-brook's temper," fashioned by the excellent Spaniard sword-smith, fifty-inch length, cup-hilted. Yet once I read, in a famous English play, of one by the name of *Tyball*, of whom it was said,

Oh, he is the courageous captain of complements. He fights as you sing;
keeps time, distance and proportion;
rests me his minim rest, one, two, and the third in your bosom;
the very butcher of a silk button,
a duellist, a duellist; a gentleman of the very first house, of the first and second cause. Ah, the immortal pas-sado! the punto reverso; the hey—

That stirs my blood, for it reminds me indeed of Nicolas, the very prince of Assila's long line of princes.

And now I am going to tell you the extraordinary circumstances of my meeting with him, and the still more extraordinary sequel.

One morning, six years ago, I strolled into Rudolf Heussler's *école d'armes*. Let me say here, *en passant*, that Heussler is dead, and the *école* over

which he ruled is the very school for swords of which I am now *le Maître*. I strolled into Heussler's place, I say, to kill an hour with the foils. I was then a subaltern in the army, poor with the poverty of the church mouse, deeply in debt, of a good appearance, wildly in love with a beauty star-high over my position, the heady blood of twenty-five years racing through my veins, and as proud as the great devil.

There was one in the world who loved me more than any other. My star-high beauty? Alas! she seemed unconscious of my existence. I refer to Heussler himself, that war veteran, lean and sharp as one of his blades, with pointed beard, long waxed mustaches, and bald as an egg. And beyond doubt his affection had for foundation my handling of the long rapier. Ever delighted to see me, heaven knew what I owed him for lessons, for he never presented his bill.

As I opened the door of the fencing hall, a man was coming out. I held the door back for him, making my bow. For thanks he flung me a glance of disdain that stung like a wasp, and out he went. I was exclaiming, "The next time, my fine fellow, I show you any point of courtesy—" when I checked the sentence, for I caught sight of the *maître*, who was standing in the center of the hall in an attitude of dejection.

"You know him?" said he with a jerk of his head towards the door.

"For an uncivil puppy, yes," I replied with heat.

"Ferdinand Rocco, of his Majesty's privy council, admired by the few, feared by the many. Silent and dangerous, and—devil take him!—my master easily here. He comes but to amuse himself at my expense. He plays with me. He has a circular parry followed by a lightning riposte in *carte* which would let daylight into the lungs of forty-nine men out of fifty. But in spite of his genius, I do not like him, Martin. He has the eyes of a sensualist, the cold smile of a scorner. One suspects a depth of infamy in that man without knowing why."

I could not help laughing at this intense earnestness. Heussler shook his

head. "He makes the ends of my fingers burn and tingle," he grunted, and went out from the hall into one of the adjoining reception rooms.

At the same instant some one else appeared. We looked at each other without recognition, and bowed.

"The *maitre* not here?" said the newcomer with a pleasant smile that lifted his brown mustache and stirred his small brown beard.

"As you perceive, Monsieur," I answered in French. The use of that language was compulsory in this fashionable *école*.

"You have finished your play, Monsieur?" he asked.

"On the contrary, I was about to commence."

"Ah! Then you may do me the honor to exchange one or two passes with the foil?"

"With pleasure, Monsieur," I agreed, sincerely liking that frank and easy tone of a gentleman.

We took off our upper garments as far as our shirts and assumed the regulation face guards.

"With your assent, Monsieur, we will use the Italian foil, which I always think affords so much more exercise to the wrist," requested my companion.

I bowed and accepted the foil which he handed to me with a graceful gesture. We saluted, and crossed blades, our arms extended almost straight, for, as he said, with this kind of foil, play is made almost entirely from the wrist. We soon warmed to the work. I found him an admirable fencer, but all the same I knew myself for the better of the two. We paused. He congratulated me courteously. We fell to again. Suddenly, in making a lunge, my opponent slipped. His wired mask came against my foil with tremendous force, dislodging the button, and my heart turned sick as I felt the point tear along the side of his head guard and sink into the scalp behind his right ear.

He uttered a gasping cry, and reeled over sideways before I could catch him. I flung down my foil and dropped on one knee by the side of the still body, from the head of which trickled a narrow red stream. At the same moment

the *maitre* came in with a bound. My fingers fumbled somewhat loosening the face guard, but it came off at last, revealing the pale features and closed eyes of my opponent, who lay as one dead.

Suddenly Heussler rapped out a terrible oath. I looked up and saw his gaze fixed, petrified, upon the senseless man. For two seconds he remained in that stupefaction, and then words shot from his lips which paralyzed me in turn:

"*Mon Dieu*, it is the king!"

And that is the story of my first personal meeting with Nicolas of Assila, my ever-beloved master, when I came within a hair's breadth of destroying that life destined to become so dear to me. I had seen him on a few occasions before, but at a distance; and then who would have dreamed of meeting him in this present fashion, and being invited to fence? But that, as I was afterwards to learn, and as you shall learn, was the king's way.

Three days after this catastrophe I received a message from my colonel requesting my immediate attendance at headquarters. As I entered the room, three other officers passed out, and I observed glances of pity in their eyes as they looked at me.

The colonel sat at the head of a long table, his fingers buried in his gray hair as he rested his forehead upon his palms. He returned my salute, then got up and walked round and round the room, tugging his mustaches. Finally he said, clearing his throat with a noise like a roll of rifles:

"I have something of the very gravest importance to communicate to you."

I bowed.

"As all the world knows, my poor Saros, you have endured the overwhelming misfortune of nearly killing your sovereign. Happily, the surgeons promise his Majesty a probably complete recovery. You are glad to hear that?"

He put the question with a look as keen and bright as a lightning flash.

"I thank God for it, my colonel," I made reply.

"I believe you, boy. Unfortunately, others will not—do not."

"Their names, my colonel?"

"Softly, softly. I understand your tone, but it avails nothing in the terrible exigency which confronts you. Suspicion is in the air we breathe; it is the air. Political plots and counter-plots, revolutionary intrigues, attempts at assassinations in high places—these things happen continually in this corner of distracted Europe. I will be brief, Saros, for your sake. There are not wanting those in power who are convinced that this deplorable accident was—was no accident at all."

I ground my teeth with rage.

He folded his arms over his blue *pe-lisse* and compelled himself by an obvious effort to look me steadily in the eyes.

"I have done what I could for you," he went on, in a grim, sad fashion. "But it is not much. Saros, it is expected of you that you meet this dishonor—this misfortune, rather—by—by—" He stopped, and despite himself his gaze dropped.

I understood and put the words into his mouth. "It is expected that I kill myself. So! I am not altogether astonished, my colonel. I have heard whispers. If the sacrifice of my little life will help my king, my country, my regiment—"

"If? If?" he cut in, lifting his hand. "There is no 'if' permitted."

"Very well." I bowed low.

He resumed his pacing up and down the carpet, brows knitted, greatly perturbed, biting his mustache. As for me, I saw the end of life, which abruptly stopped me like a closed road, a *cul-de-sac*; and there fell over my spirits a sudden depression, a cold, heavy fog which chilled me even physically. Farewell to gay life! Farewell to Katrine, my star-high divinity who would never know my adoration.

Once more the colonel cleared his throat, which had become so husky. Upon my left shoulder he laid his right hand.

"I can offer you no hope whatever," said he solemnly. "I tried my best, but without success. Yet in one way I obtained a modification of the sentence. Clearly, if you kill yourself the world will read its own meaning into the act,

which will seem to bring home to you this whispered assertion of guilt. From that breath of dishonor you are allowed to save yourself. You must go, Saros, but not necessarily by your own hand."

"I confess it is an enigma to me, Colonel."

"My suggestion is—an honorable affair."

"Ah! I am to pick a quarrel with some one?"

"Precisely."

"Some one who will kill me?"

"Exactly."

"But suppose I kill him?"

"He must be your master."

"I do not know such an one."

"He exists, however."

"His name?"

"The Count Ferdinand Rocco."

True, most true! I stepped off my high perch. I had forgotten Rocco.

"You admit it?" said Colonel Henselt.

"If I insult him in a deadly way he will unerringly kill me."

"You must so insult him, my poor Saros."

"Be easy."

"He will never be told of your real motive for crossing swords with him. The quarrel which you must force will satisfy every one perfectly. You will die, but without a shadow of dishonor. This is my suggestion, which you are at liberty to decline."

"On the contrary, I accept it. Rocco has a circular parry followed by a lightning *riposte* which would let daylight into the lungs of forty-nine men out of fifty. I am already dead. Good-by, my colonel."

"The sooner the better, my poor friend."

"I will see Rocco to-night."

"I may beg that you will accept my good offices in the affair which will follow?"

"I shall be charmed."

He crushed my fingers in a grip of sympathy and I went out. I at once noticed what I had suspected during the past three days: I was a shunned man. Cold gloom deepened upon my spirits; the gloom of the near eclipse. It was a wonderful summer afternoon, and a



I found myself in the street. Through my whirl of ideas crashed the cathedral bells which were ringing for evening service. Twilight was falling.

military band was executing, with great *verve*, one of Chaminade's waltzes. Suddenly I saw Katrine, her delicate face shaded by a lace parasol. She caught sight of me, changed color, I thought, but gave me a little smile which, an hour ago, would have been heaven opening. Now? Bah, what did it matter to a dead man!

Have you, in perfect health, known what it means to live your presumably last day upon earth? I conclude not. It is an experience, believe me, which does not invite envy in large quantities. How did I spend the rest of that day? While the sun shone I sat in the horticultural gardens and listened to the military band, reading into the gayest airs the most intense melancholy; and into the sad ones the depths of despair. And if at this juncture you say, "Saros was clearly not killed, since he recounts these stories," I will answer in a brief word: "Wait!"

When the music ceased, and the bandsmen, in their glittering uniforms, straggled away through the gardens, I rose with the intent of seeing Heussler at the school and telling him what was about to happen to me. Then I dismissed the idea. He would want to be my second in the affair; and it would cut him to the heart to see me—his favorite pupil—fall a victim to that terrible parry and *riposte*.

I dined instead, in solitary state, and made an excellent meal. After it, my gloom was tempered with philosophy. I went out to find Rocco.

He was not at his house. I was referred to one of his clubs. Here I learnt that he had been sent for by the king. I followed him to the palace, where I was told that he had had a three minutes' interview with Nicolas. I was much relieved to know that his Majesty was well enough to be able to converse even for that brief period. Ferdinand Rocco was gone, however. Where? To call upon Katrine.

That stung me into a reasonless passion. I continued the pursuit only to find myself a minute or so too late. My request to see Katrine was nigh in the nature of a peremptory command. She responded to it by a chilling manner.

Her beauty has that exterior environment of coldness. Our conversation was short and dramatic. I rapped out: "Count Rocco has been here?"

"Well?" The word was like a drop of ice water.

"You—you—" I stopped, stammered, then went on in a blind rush: "You are aware that I detest him?"

"Is that all you have come to say?"

I cried wildly: "Give me permission to say more."

A line appeared between her eyes, and a strange shadow crept into them. Over her forehead she passed a hand as if to smooth out that little crease caused by some fear or perplexity. For a full minute we looked at each other; she, with that shadowed expression; I, with heaven knows what madness. Then she said, quite controlled:

"I beg of you to leave me."

I bowed. "You will permit me to kiss your hand?"

She half extended it, then drew it back. "No."

I found myself in the street. Through my whirl of ideas crashed the cathedral bells which were ringing for evening service. Twilight was falling, and the arc lights of the city were leaping into existence, like lustrous pearls. Still I sought Rocco. He was dining, and would be present at the opera afterwards. Well, I would meet him there.

I went, and found a big cosmopolitan crowd surging about the vestibules and the foyer. To me it was a dismal experience. I saw a score of intimate acquaintances, but they were victims of an abrupt and alarming attack of myopia, for they failed to perceive me, one and all of them. Misery forbade anger. And possibly I should have been as short-sighted if the positions had been reversed. This whisper that I had intentionally injured the King was one that scorched, that branded.

Ferdinand Rocco did not appear, and as the corridors were quite empty I went into the auditorium. A girl was singing in "La Belle Hélène;" and through the profound hush, through the darkened theatre, her notes throbbed as the voice of those wonderful nightingales which sing in June, over in Eng-

land. A cord seemed to strain itself round my throat. Suddenly the lights flamed into being. The act was over. People stirred, chatted. I threw a somber glance over that sea of people enjoying themselves; I saw the coiled hair of women, the glimmer of gems, flowers which nestled in white bosoms. Exquisite and charming! Tears rushed to my eyes. I looked round at the boxes and almost at once perceived Rocco. He was with Katrine again, confound him! He must have arrived the moment after I entered.

I had eyes for no one else save those two. In a minute or so Katrine saw me. She went on talking to her companion, who stood by her side, hands in pockets, a colored ribbon worn *en écharpe* over his shirt-front. I observed that he did not appear to be taking any intense interest in the conversation, so that I was the more surprised when Katrine gave an obvious start, and a frown of hot annoyance troubled her face. She looked up at Rocco, spoke a word or two, and he went out. Almost at the same instant Katrine fixed her eyes upon me, seemed to hesitate, and then beckoned.

I set about obeying the signal, telling myself that I was a fool to trouble about her. In the corridor leading to her box I met Rocco. We were alone. Now or never!

And then all at once it occurred to me that although I had to pick a deadly quarrel with him, I had not thought of providing myself with even a plausible pretext. Fool! I confronted him and commenced to stammer. He surveyed me with a stern expression which changed swiftly to one of disgust. He believed me to be the worse for drink! Before I could convince him of the error, he had disappeared.

My cheeks burned. Never mind. I would find him again during the evening. It would be easy enough.

I entered the box where Katrine was waiting for me. To my surprise, I found her so deeply moved by the stress of some emotion that she could not speak. She had pushed her chair back from the light. From her presence emanated the delicate perfume of verbenas. A pale

saffron-colored gown enhanced her dark loveliness; and in her hair, which was black as a raven's wing, glittered diamonds set here and there, singly, in a new fashion, and which scintillated like stars in those tresses which resembled night.

I drew up a chair and waited. Curious eyes from the opposite boxes watched us. A subdued roar of chatter surged up from below. The orchestra was beginning to tune up.

Katrine murmured at last: "I should not have called you. I was wrong; only—only—I felt that I needed a friend instantly; and then I—caught sight of you."

"That was heaven granting your prayer."

She went on, looking, not at me, but at her knees outlined under the saffron silk: "I have been insulted, Monsieur."

I breathed hard.

"I have been insulted in a gross manner," murmured those red lips of a girl.

"The man's name, Mademoiselle?"

She faltered. Fled the color from her cheeks. She lifted her eyes and fixed them upon me in a baffling way. She whispered: "I have said too much already."

"His name, Mademoiselle?"

"Count Rocco."

"Thank you." At that moment the curtain rolled up and a deep silence descended. I bowed and went out.

And the very first person I saw was Rocco himself.

He was pacing up and down the crimson carpet of the corridor, arms folded over his chest, glowering, more than thoughtful. He drew near to me. I coughed meaningfully. He tossed me a glance and turned his head.

"A moment, Count, if you please." I demanded in my very best manner.

He wheeled about. I went on:

"Three days ago, at Maitre Heussler's academy, you were not polite to me. Three minutes ago you did me the offense to regard me as not sober. Then a very dear lady friend has complained to me about you."

I stopped. One ought never to be prolix in these delicate passages.

He looked at me through narrowed eyes. The strains from the violins floated

into the corridor, and a man began to sing in a deep bass voice. Rocco seemed to listen to a few bars before he answered:

"Admirable insolence, seeing that it comes too late from you, boy."

"You mean?"

"That I will not fight with a possible regicide."

Blood of Capo! as Nicolas would say. The sentence stung like a whip-lash; but scarcely had it passed his lips when I struck him over the mouth—a swinging blow with the back of my right hand.

He ought to have turned horribly pale, should perhaps have leaped upon me; but he did nothing of the sort. He just remained still, immobile, peering at me as if I interested him in an extraordinary fashion. Then he threw back his head in the attitude of a silent laugh over some huge joke.

"Very well," said he, tranquilly. "I have accepted your little present and will make you a suitable return."

We bowed and parted.

And at that instant, for the first time, came realization of the quandary I had got myself into. I had to lose my life to Rocco, and despite that understanding I had promised Katrine to chastise him. An impossible situation, truly. Then I laughed, seeing the difficulty vanish like a puff of steam. What chance had I against Ferdinand Rocco, who amused himself with Rudolf Heussler? One—two—and the third in my bosom. So be it.

I went home to my flute and played twelve of Chopin's nocturnes while waiting for a formal message from my adversary. The latter did not disappoint himself; and I executed those weird night-pieces in music with a feeling that brought tears to my eyes.

With dawn arrived Colonel Henselt, shattering a blissful dream of Katrine holding out white arms to me imploringly. We had coffee, no word being spoken. We went out to a waiting carriage, Henselt bearing my weapon as well as his own. I believe that in Italy and France they fight with a regulation dueling sword, but such is not the custom with us.

Our little gathering arrived simultane-

ously at the place of meeting, which was between two rows of poplar trees which all night had been dropping long purple catkins upon the grass. The morning air had a bite in it, and was weighted with dew which sparkled in strings of jewels on drifting gossamer webs. Preliminaries were brief. Coats, waistcoats, collars, ties were discarded. We turned back our cuffs. Our seconds crossed their weapons between us. The Colonel's parade voice rasped out: "Are you ready?" And then, after a second of silence, "*En garde*."

They stepped back nimbly, lowering their swords so that the bright points rested on the grass, and they leaned forward, watching us with the most intense concentration.

I accepted his engagement in *carte*. We had learnt in different schools, you must understand; he in the French, which is the most modern; I in the Italian, which is the most poetic, if you please. He fought with a mobile arm; I with a straight one, playing from my wrist. Capo Ferro of Siena, the immortal, is my master; his, I ventured a guess, Labat of the Académie de Toulouse.

Obviously he did not mean to urge matters. He held his head a little over to one side, a frown of consideration between his eyes as if studying a new idea which he intended to test upon me. Now and again he stamped his foot, feigning a lunge, which is quite characteristic of Labat, and discomfiting to a novice; but my rigid arm and long rapier made the trick seem foolish. And truly, I think with Nicolas that the Italians have done well to preserve the rapier blade, slender, quadrangular, with cup, *pas d'âne*, and quillons, which is, believe me, a poem in steel.

If you ask me just what *pas d'âne* and quillons are, you choose an unfortunate moment. I fling you a hasty answer that the first are curved guards in the handle of the blade; the second cross-pieces, straight or curving, immediately above the cup, or shell.

Suddenly my antagonist woke up, and a vicious thrust in *carte* under my wrist almost reached my right side. I heard Colonel Henselt rap out a subdued oath. Strange, since I had his instructions to die upon the ground! Still, I could un-

derstand his instinct. Until that moment I had fought as one who means to keep his skin whole at all costs, forgetting all else. But I had not come here to keep a whole skin. I had come to find an honorable death.

The paralyzing thought stopped midway my best lunge, delivered on the outside of his blade, finger-nails turned in pronation—downwards—with the action, quite in the Capo Ferro style. It paralyzed it, I say, and for a fraction of a second left me open to his counter. I could recover, but should I? I had got to die; then why delay, why put off the fatal moment? A thrust under my outstretched arm and he would have me, sure enough.

Every instinct of a swordsman, every instinct of youth, of tenacious life, of hot blood, ardent desires, rose in revolt to draw me back upon guard.

To write as much occupies a minute of time, and ten seconds for the reading of it; yet the terrible question and my ensuing answer filled out but the measure of the lightning's flash. Come death! I remained in that lunging attitude, closing my eyes, with an instantaneous expectation of his point gliding between my rib bones—which was not nice, believe me.

And then Colonel Henselt's harsh voice roared: "Stop!" With the word he beat up our weapons with his own.

Rocco stepped back, his face a stone mask. His second flashed out: "Your reason, Colonel?"

"My principal is hurt. There is blood on his wrist."

It was true, certainly, though but a scratch such as a cat's claws might have inflicted. That thrust in *carte* to which I have alluded had just touched the skin under my forearm. Henselt made a pretence of examining it. I did not thank him for his interference. I had already endured the stab of death, and now I must suffer it again!

The intermission was brief. We replied to the formal question whether or no we wished to continue, then fell in guard again. Almost instantly he gave me an example of his circular parry—the famous *parade de cercle* of his school, holding his hand as high as his mouth, low-

ering his point, describing in a twinkling the figure of a circle, and thrusting in *carte* with all his force. The flare-up in his eyes, the stamp of his right foot, the deep "Hah!" from his lips were simultaneous. No doubt he thought he had me; and so, indeed he had.

I parried with that breaking sweep beloved of the old Italian masters, but not altogether could I divert that lightning lunge in perfect time, measure and proportion. I saved my lungs, but his sword's point ran in just above my hip, touching the bone. It had the burning sting of a hot iron; and the pain of it, and the sight of his white face peering up at me—for he remained momentarily still in the forward attitude of his thrust, and a sudden vision of Katrine's fair face which loomed out of a purple mist before my eyes—Katrine, who held my promise of punishment—whipped me to one great effort at reprisal.

He divined it, saw it coming, but that second of delay in watching me after his lunge, which he had permitted himself, served him no good turn. I was after him with the "*botta lunga*," in which extended rapier and all the limbs swing forward in a long-reaching thrust. It was too much for his faltering recovery. I heard a loud shout, felt a terrible weight drag at my weapon, and there was Ferdinand Rocco looking at and through me with a stupefied, an amazed expression. I had run him through both lungs; and he fell into his second's arms with a gasp.

The purple mist came swinging before my eyes again. I felt Henselt lowering me gently upon the sward. The surgeon was busy with my antagonist, who was coughing up his life. I was hurt, but I was only too well aware that I was not hurt seriously. I had bungled the whole matter in a nice fashion! That thought of Katrine, and no doubt a cowardly love of life. . . . I groaned and looked with shamed eyes into the face of Colonel Henselt. To my astonishment it was transfigured with delight. A tear was running down his hooked nose, and drops of dew shone on his gray mustache, but that did not detract from the sublimity of his expression. I blurted:

"I fear it is but a flesh wound, my colonel."

"Thank God!" said he in a breaking voice, in a voice which echoed farther and farther away, into an infinite remote where my consciousness proceeded to lose itself completely.

Young blood is your true balm of Gilead. Within a week I inhaled the open air. The next day I was sent for by Nicolas, who accorded me not only a gracious pardon, but created me Count Saros—I! More, he called me friend—a name ever sacred on his lips.

What did it mean? You doubtless put the question to me who was discreet enough to put it to no one. But I thought, and thought, and thought again; and I will tell you my opinion of it all, my reading of the conundrum.

Count Ferdinand Rocco, that all-powerful minister of state in Assila, where statecraft is not quite the polished art as in other countries of Europe, was a man detested, feared, suspected, but impreguably placed. Now I hold it likely that when I fenced with Nicolas and hurt him, there was never in the minds of those near to him any thought of willful intent on my part. I am prepared to swear that the King talked more of my foil-play than of his wound. It was then whispered to him—for I do not believe he created the idea himself—that, if I was indeed the miracle in swordsmanship which he has ever held me to be, I might be induced to measure rapiers with the inconvenient Count Rocco, and assist him to and beyond the dark borderland.

The plan was agreed upon, Colonel Henselt taken into confidence. I was to be ordered to fight Rocco. Then it occurred to these schemers that I might possibly allow him to run me through. To meet this exigency they strengthened their position and my hands by bringing Katrine into the secret. She was to plead my help in the matter of an insult offered to her by Rocco, and which existed, probably, only in imagination. That, it was felt, would send a flame into my blood and make me fight not so much as to be killed as to kill. Do not blame Katrine. She is not without fault; but then, she acted to save my life.

I will confess that when I evolved this explanation of my remarkable forgiveness and instant high favor, it seemed to me that the authors of the scheme might have dispensed with it, and have frankly asked me to deal with Count Rocco. But that would have been taking me into a secret of state, and a dark one, too. Also I perceived what doubtless was apparent to them: the request put openly would have had a bad flavor, a smattering of the work of a bravo, a paid duelist, an executioner, which would have kept my rapier sheathed against Rocco—mine, the one blade capable of beating deadly time with his.

So, that is what I think, what I feel to be the truth. And believing it, I am right glad to know that, after all, Count Rocco came safely out of long weeks of battle with death. But the purpose of his political enemies was achieved by that lapse of time during which much of importance happened, and which could not feel his hurtful influence. When he left his bed his power was gone, and Nicolas king indeed.

Bah! I want to forget the entire affair. I remember only my interview with Nicolas, with my beloved master. He called me to him ostensibly to discuss sword-play, the baffling time-thrusts of Ridolfo Capo Ferro, his idol. True, he just touched on Katrine. He said:

"There is a cold heart in a lovely bosom, Count Saros! It is not so warm as the mention of it makes your cheeks. I have heard that you think of her. Why not? One day you may thaw the springs of her love; you may set loose those floods which will be the more impetuous for their long sealing. Who knows?"

Then she flitted from his mind like a mote in a sun ray, and again he was at his heart's topic. He said:

"You will fence with me every morning, Count. That is understood. I give you choice of my blades. We will start with *mezzo tempo*." And then he took me aside and hinted at the first of those secret adventures, he in concealing guise, with me and my long rapier to bear him company in some strange places and through some singular exploits.

"The Four Vaucaires," an adventure of Saros and his King, will be in the January Red Book.

A PAGE FROM THE NOTEBOOK
OF A "PICTURE CHASER"



"You won't care if I take the photograph," he suggested.

The Picture of a Lady

By CLIFFORD S. RAYMOND

Author of "His Apostolic Reputation," etc.

Illustrated by H. J. Mowat

A "PICTURE CHASER" is a young person, almost always masculine and therefore here referred to as "he," who thinks he is a reporter, and who, the city editor thinks, is not.

The city editor hopes the young person will be a reporter some day, and in hope has hired him. He may become one, or, after brief, sad experience with local room ways, he may depart and become prominently connected with the steel trust or a railroad.

In the meantime he is useful. He gets

pictures. Occasionally he writes a story. A "story," in newspaper parlance, is anything from three lines of solid agate to three columns of triple-leaded nonpareil or minion. If the picture chaser writes it, it's likely to be three lines. For the most part, he gathers photographs.

If a young woman is drowned, he goes out to get her picture; and if she was pretty the city editor is glad—not that she was drowned, but that she was pretty. Or if she and several other young ladies are to dance at a fête of the Sons of St.

George or at a Swedish picnic or a Persian bazaar, and she is pretty, the picture chaser gets her picture—or the staff photographer takes it—and the city editor is glad.

It is a question of pulchritude and not of fate, with him. The paper must be illustrated and people like to look at pictures of pretty women.

Mr. Bolingbrook Johnson, of the *Chronicle*, had become a successful if not an enthusiastic picture chaser. It is a craft if not an art, requiring guile, resourcefulness, wit, stratagem, a knowledge of human weakness, perseverance, stubbornness, tact, and not infrequently a disregard of conventions and prevailing notions regarding property rights.

Some victims of news would travel from Spitzbergen to Chicago to get their pictures in the paper; others would travel from New York to Herat to keep their pictures out. The picture chaser deals with both kinds.

Naturally Mr. Johnson, who was not going into the steel trust, wanted to write first page stories and be a star, but while ambition ran like a mountain sheep up the steep side of Parnassus, accomplishment hobbled along on crutches, and Mr. Johnson gathered pictures.

He was on his way to the Square Deal Saloon, 3496 Sycamore street, in the early evening, with a sheet of City Press copy in his pocket. It read:

BULLETIN:—John Sharpe, bartender, 1431 Addison St., shot and killed Kate La Forge and wounded Nelson Blakely, 392 South Ave., in the Square Deal Saloon, 3496 Sycamore street, this afternoon. He shot himself, dying instantly. Will have story later.

"If it isn't just a cheap saloon row," the city editor had said, "get the pictures and the story. It might be worth printing."

Mr. Johnson set forth without enthusiasm.

It was very difficult for bartenders to make news by shooting ladies and gentlemen in saloons. Usually, they made only nuisances and paragraphs such as:

John Sharpe, a bartender, shot and

killed a woman named Kate La Forge yesterday afternoon in the Square Deal Saloon, 3946 Sycamore Street. He then turned his weapon on Nelson Blakely, the La Forge woman's companion, and inflicted a serious wound, after which he shot himself, dying instantly. Blakely was taken to the Alexian hospital. He may recover. The police say Sharpe was jealous.

There is no food for reportorial ambition in that—a paragraph with a one-line head:

JEALOUS BARTENDER SHOTS TWO—no fame, no progress, no satisfaction.

Therefore Mr. Johnson went, but without enthusiasm, and, as a confident craftsman, without hurry. He did not spring lightly from the curb to the passing street car and come breathlessly upon the scene of disaster. He went to the Dizzy and had a glass of beer with a half dozen fat oysters opened at the counter by his friend Averell, the loquacious French Canadian.

Thus bulwarked against the assaults of fate, he proceeded north at his leisure to the Square Deal Saloon, where an uncommunicative bartender served him with a glass of beer indifferently, and the information surlily that Mr. John Sharpe, when in life, had worked at Mike's Place, 3409 Elm street, and that further, he knew nothing of the gentleman who had chosen to shoot a lady, an other gentleman and himself, in one of the small back rooms of the Square Deal Saloon.

"It's tough luck for a decent place like this to have some rowdies come in and shoot holes through the saloon license," said Mr. Johnson amiably. "But your reputation is so good that the mayor will know you couldn't help it. You haven't got a picture of Kate La Forge, have you?"

"If I had I'd frame it," said the bartender. "This is going to get the old man in Dutch."

At Mike's Place, Mr. Johnson found grief. A fat, red-checked bartender leaned heavily on his elbows at the end of the bar and spoke in chastened accents to two gentlemen who leaned against the bar from the front and ate

of smoked herring and crackers, moistening their food and their sorrow from large glasses.

"Yes," said the fat bartender, "Charlie never did no harm to anyone but himself."

"He was a good scout, all right," said one of the two eating mourners taking a bite at his herring.

"He was a good scout," said the second eating mourner.

"I was afraid women would get him, though," said the bartender.

"And women got him," said the first eating mourner.

"But he got her," said the second eating mourner. "She was no good."

"I was asking Charlie about her last night," said the first eating mourner. "I knew he used to be crazy about her. He laughed and said he had to 'can' her."

"She was a Canadian girl," said the fat bartender. "Lived in a little town up near Quebec, French, I guess. They've telegraphed her folks."

"Rough on the folks," said the second eating mourner.

"Charlie said she was some girl in that little town before she came here," said the first eating mourner. "Her folks think she has been doing well."

"Rough on the folks," said the second eating mourner again.

"She was a pretty girl," said the bartender. "I saw her picture."

"Charlie any folks?" asked the first eating mourner.

"None I know of. Said he didn't have any. Always said he wanted to be cremated and told the old man to plant a rosebush in his ashes. The old man has taken charge of his body. Guess that's what he's going to do."

"Old man's a pretty good scout," said the first eating mourner.

"He's a pretty good scout," said the second eating mourner.

"Well, Charlie's gone," said the bartender, and rubbed the bar with a wet cloth.

"He's gone, all right," said the first eating mourner, and went to the lunch counter for another piece of herring.

"Women never get you anything," said the second eating mourner.

"It's bad business," said the bartender.

"It's bad business," said the second eating mourner.

"Give us a couple fresh ones, Gus," said the first eating mourner, and then the bartender recognized the fact of Mr. Johnson's presence for the first time. Mr. Johnson had a beer and found the fat bartender loquacious and reasonable, but without pictures.

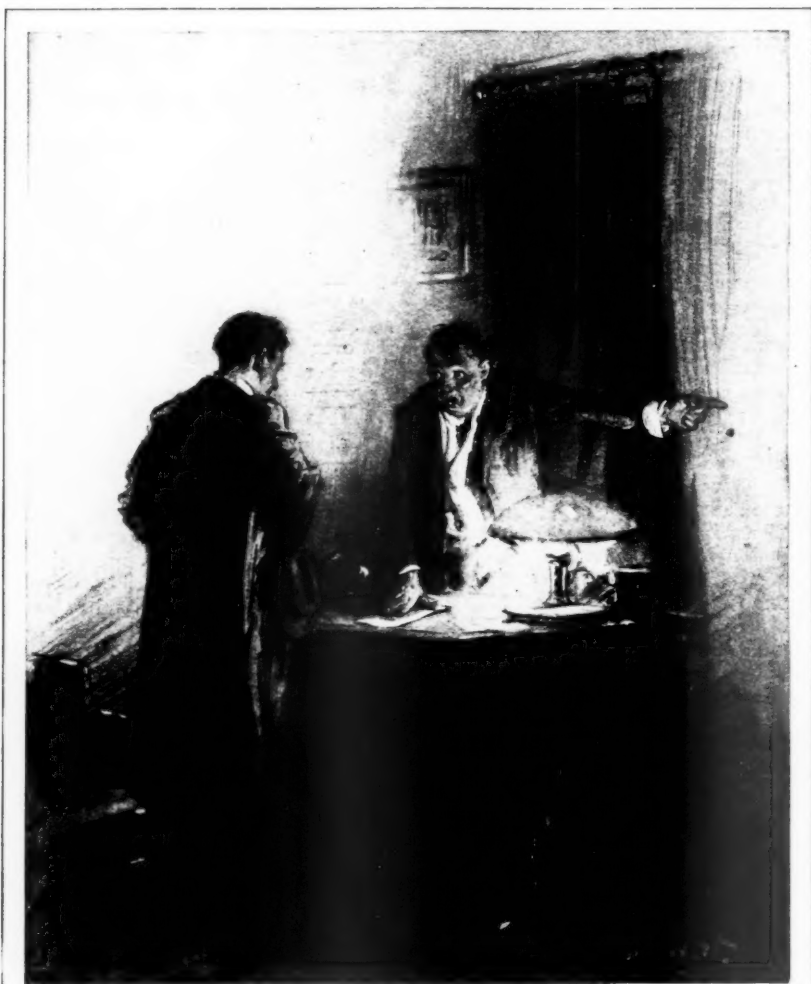
"Charlie always said he never had none took, but he had a picture of the girl. He showed it to me once. Maybe it's over to his room. I've got his address here somewhere. Here it is: Mrs. Sulloway, 1316 Ashly street. That's just three blocks north and two west."

Mr. Johnson was under obligations and avowed them. He also bought drinks for the first and second eating mourners and for the bartender, and they drank to Charlie, a good scout.

On the way to the boarding house, Mr. Johnson began to take a new interest in the story. He knew how difficult it would be to make the city editor see anything but the picture, if it were of a pretty woman. A number of young men tried daily to put a throb in their art and one of the city editor's concerns was for the sanity of his paper.

Mr. Johnson heard the church bells in a simple French Canadian village and saw the beautiful young girl innocently starting forth into the world. Was it to lift a mortgage on the old farm or to support her aged grandparents? He saw the form, the silent and huddled form—Mr. Johnson's dead were always silent and huddled—and the maniacal man with a smoking revolver—Mr. Johnson's revolvers always smoked after they had been discharged—in the back room of the saloon.

Mr. Johnson knew it was tragedy—just as good tragedy as "Paolo and Francesca." They'd bury Kate La Forge back home; the church bells would ring and one of the aged, rheumatic grandparents—Mr. Johnson's grandparents always were rheumatic and leaned heavily on a cane—would be there, looking with dim eyes at the casket of his pride and hope—the tragedy of the bartender and the beautiful, unfortunate Kate La Forge.



"You've got your hat. Get out," said Mr. Strawn.

But the city editor wouldn't see it—wouldn't hear any bells, wouldn't humanize the thing at all. The city editor would merely see that he had another reporter in the "My God, Maggie!" state of mind.

At the lodging house a morose landlady greeted Mr. Johnson.

"It's getting so it's worth a woman's reputation to keep a lodging house," she said. "The police came around two nights ago and broke in looking for a

murderer. Last night a man turned on the gas, and if we hadn't smelled it, the coroner would have been around this morning, and now this man Sharpe makes me trouble. I'm tired of having you newspaper fellows and the police coming around here. This place is run for respectable people."

If Mr. Johnson had not been able to assuage such a sorrow as that of the landlady he would not have been a proficient craftsman. He fed gently the lady's desire for respectability. The austerity of her grief yielded to his blandishments, and her ruffled emotions were smoothed.

"I think there is a picture of that woman in his room," she said when the mollification was complete. "He showed it to me some time ago and I think it's on his mantel. Come up with me and we'll look. I don't mind being obliging when folks treat me right, and you're a pretty decent fellow, even if you are a reporter. There was a newspaper fellow here two days ago and acted as brazen as if he owned the place. You can come upstairs with me."

She led Mr. Johnson up the stairs and opened the door of a small room.

"This is his room," she said. "Lucky he paid his rent in advance, so I aint out anything. That's the picture over there on the mantel. That's Kate La Forge. She was a good looking woman, or had been. Sharpe wasn't such a bad sort of fellow, and he must have been hard drove to it. That's her picture. I was looking at it two weeks ago and saying that she was a swell looking girl and he said it was Kate La Forge, his girl, and that she was a fine-looking girl, all right."

The photograph was that of a beautiful young woman in a party gown. Mr. Johnson looked at it for several minutes, and he knew the saloon murder was tragedy.

"You wont care 'if I take the photograph," he suggested.

"Oh, I wouldn't dare do that," said the landlady. "A man's things are always safe in my rooms, and even if he's shot himself it doesn't make any difference."

"I'd have known that," said Mr. John-

son, "but I thought maybe this picture was different."

"I'd like to let you have it," said the landlady, "but if any question came up about Sharpe's belongings they might be asking questions of me. I'd better not do it."

"That's all right," said Mr. Johnson. "You're quite right about it. I'm obliged to you for showing me the picture."

Mr. Johnson, surrendering meekly, started briskly from the room. At the door the landlady stopped him.

"Here's your hat," she said, pointing at it on the bed.

Mr. Johnson laughed.

"Somebody's done that to you before," he said. "Oh, very well. Turn your back, please." Mr. Johnson walked over to the mantel and took down the photograph. Then he stepped back to the landlady, who watched him as if uncertain what her conduct should be. Mr. Johnson encompassed her with his most ingratiating smile.

"You didn't see anything. You don't know anything. A reporter fellow was around here. There was a picture in the room but it disappeared. That's all you know about it, Mrs. Sulloway, and that's more than you'll ever need explain. No one's going to ask any questions about that picture. And I'm very greatly obliged to you."

Mrs. Sulloway instantly decided that Mr. Johnson was a nice enough young man to keep the photograph. Young men who treated her with a solacing consideration were not numerous in her experience, and Mr. Johnson had earned his picture.

The city editor heard an enthusiastic story of the tragedy of Kate La Forge and the bartender who would return to roses, and smiled slightly, seeing only a saloon murder but liking Mr. Johnson's fervor. Mr. Johnson knew that he was neither truly interpretative nor convincing. It was in his mind, but he could not transfer it to another's. The photograph of Kate La Forge was its own argument.

"Stunning looking girl," said the city editor. "Here, Jimmie, take this to the artists and tell them to make a border for two columns. You may have a half

column, Johnson, but don't get emotional. This isn't an illustrated song. It's a piece for the paper. Play up the roses. It's a good picture and may carry the story."

Mr. Johnson accepted fate, and later a copy reader who never allowed a paragraph to start with "The" and who never permitted "Very" to remain in any copy, quite dispassionately wrung all the pathos out of Mr. Johnson's short story of the loves of Kate La Forge and the rose bartender, and left it dry.

When Mr. Johnson came in from his assignment the following evening, he was informed that Mr. Whitcomb, the managing editor, had ordered him produced as quickly as possible. The order was shouted at him by the office boy, two reporters, and the assistant city editor in chorus the moment he set foot in the local room. Mr. Johnson knew that he indeed was wanted. It was an unusual honor, and Mr. Johnson was filled with dread.

An important looking person sat by Mr. Whitcomb's desk. He was important to the eye, and Mr. Johnson's prescience instantly told him that he was in a Presence. Also that the Presence was furious, menacing and savage. The Presence was quiet enough, but it had the complete aspect of wrath.

"Johnson," said Mr. Whitcomb, "where did you get that picture of Kate La Forge?"

Mr. Johnson looked at the Presence and the Presence glowered.

"I got it in the room of John Sharpe, the bartender who shot her," he said.

"How did you know it was her picture?"

"Mrs. Sulloway, the landlady, said it was."

"This is Mr. Strawn."

Mr. Johnson knew the Strawn name. It was very important. Mr. Johnson indeed stood in a presence.

He looked at Mr. Strawn again and the Presence glowered again.

"Mr. Strawn says the photograph is that of his wife," the managing editor continued. "He wants you to tell where you got it in order that the person who gave it to you may be punished."

"This reporter got a picture of my wife," said Mr. Strawn. "I don't know how, but I am going to know; and you used it to illustrate an article about a saloon murder. You have printed a picture of my wife and labeled it with the name of Kate La Forge. This is going to be serious business."

"It's quite serious enough already if it is true," said the managing editor.

"I am telling you it is true," said Mr. Strawn. "That is sufficient for you."

"Mr. Strawn," said the managing editor, "we'll get along much more rapidly without comment of that kind from you. Johnson, did you fake that picture?"

"No sir, I did not," said Mr. Johnson.

"We'll stand by you if you are in the right, even if a mistake has been made. You got it at Sharpe's lodging house?"

"Yes, sir."

"He doesn't dare go with me to that landlady," said Mr. Strawn.

"Are you ready to go now?" Mr. Johnson asked.

"My car is downstairs," said Mr. Strawn, and picked up his hat.

"Do the best you can, Johnson," said the managing editor. "There's a devil of a mistake somewhere, but if you've been on the square, we'll stand by you."

Mr. Johnson took with him the photograph he had obtained from Sharpe's room.

The landlady looked as if fate had betrayed her again through her amiable weaknesses until she discovered that it was the nice young Mr. Johnson and not herself who was in trouble because of the picture. Then her pride in her judgment of human nature came to her rescue, and she to the rescue of the nice young man.

"Sure, that's Kate La Forge's picture," she said to the irate Strawn. "Sharpe showed it to me a dozen times and told me it was the picture of her. It was on his mantel and I gave it to this young man yesterday."

"You went to more trouble than usual," said Mr. Strawn to Mr. Johnson.

"Come to the saloon," said Mr. Johnson, and they were driven to Mike's Place.

"Ask the fat bartender whose picture



"I wonder why he said it was a picture of the La Forge woman?" she asked.

it is," said Mr. Johnson as they entered.

The fat bartender was a satisfactory witness for the defense.

"That's the woman who put poor Charlie Sharpe on the bum," he said. "That's Kate La Forge. Charlie showed me her picture a dozen times. Ask Mr. Ahern, the proprietor over there, or that fellow at the lunch counter. They've both seen it."

Accumulating and corroborating evidence was thrown like feathers at the Gibraltar of Mr. Strawn's conviction. He was a gentleman who knew the picture of his wife when he saw it.

"Come with me," he said to Mr. Johnson. "I'll take you home and show you the photograph of my wife."

The Presence became more commanding, more complete, in the hallway of the Strawn residence. Mr. Johnson, whose resolution not to be trampled upon in any way by this austere being was growing with his curiosity to know what kind of mistake had been made, observed even with awe how the Presence expanded instantly to fill and even envelop the large house and assert its every brick and marble slab his own.

Mr. Strawn led Mr. Johnson into the library and opened a drawer in a table. Mr. Johnson, looking about him, saw beyond draperies hanging at a door opening into an adjoining room, the edge of a light blue gown and a slippers foot which tapped the rug gently.

Mr. Strawn did not find what he sought in the first drawer, and opened another. Mr. Johnson watched the foot. It seemed to him to express just the delicate amount of impatience and irritation which the wife of a Presence might find it possible to feel day after day on the return of Mr. James Strawn.

"Here it is," said Mr. Strawn.

It was a photograph similar in every respect to that which Mr. Johnson had taken from the room of Charles Sharpe, bartender, and which had been published as the photograph of Kate La Forge.

"It's the same picture," said Mr. Johnson, "the identical photograph. There's a mistake somewhere."

"There's no mistake. You deliberately took a picture of my wife from a photog-

rapher's or stole it elsewhere and told your editors it was a picture of the La Forge woman. There'll be something to pay for this."

"No, that's too easy an explanation," said Mr. Johnson. "It's convenient for you but it doesn't satisfy me. I know that Sharpe told people that this was the picture of Kate La Forge. They believe it is. You say the picture is the picture of Mrs. Strawn. You ought to know, but you're getting along too fast when you say I faked it. I never faked a picture but once in my life. I don't have to. I can get them. I'd like to see Mrs. Strawn."

"You'd what?"

"I want to see Mrs. Strawn. I'm as much interested in this as you are."

"You've got your hat. Get out," said Mr. Strawn.

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Strawn looked at each other across the table. Mr. Johnson smiled deprecatingly. Mr. Strawn took a step to come around the table.

"No, you don't," said Mr. Johnson.

If Mr. Strawn had thought for a moment that restraint was a hardship he need not endure, he abandoned the idea.

The lady whose slipper Mr. Johnson had seen beyond the draperies came into the room.

"Why do you want to see me?" she asked. "Who are you?"

Mr. Johnson knew that the picture of Kate La Forge was the photograph of Mrs. James Strawn. She was young. She was assertive. Mr. Johnson could perceive that she had often done as she was doing now: that she often had asserted her refusal to accept the positive and final decisions of Mr. Strawn as her own final decisions. She looked as if this frequent if not constant assertion had tired her, but as if it were necessary to her self-respect that she maintain it always; as if she would not have it otherwise than that he should reach positive and final decisions and she disregard them.

He had so much the worse of this encounter and stood so sullenly and set back that she, seeing it, became mirthful.

She smiled at Mr. Johnson.

"I am a reporter, Mrs. Strawn. I am Mr. Johnson."

She smiled again and held out her hand.

"Sit down, Mr. Johnson. Why do you want to see me?"

"Mrs. Strawn, we've made a bad mistake and I am very sorry. I got a picture I was told was a photograph of a woman who had been murdered, a woman named La Forge. We printed it. I don't see how it could happen. Mr. Strawn says I did it intentionally or did it knowing that the picture was not the picture of the La Forge woman. That is not true. Three or four friends of the murderer, a man named Sharpe, have said that he showed them the picture and said it was Kate La Forge."

"I saw the picture in the paper this morning," said Mrs. Strawn. "It is my picture."

"I am held responsible," Mr. Johnson suggested.

"That is nonsense," said Mrs. Strawn cheerfully. "I gave the picture to the man named Sharpe. He wrote me a foolish letter a long time ago. It was a foolish letter and made me laugh. He said he had seen me a number of times, and he asked if he could be bold enough to ask for my photograph. It was preposterous, but all he wanted was a photograph, and there was no reason why he should not have it. I have saved the letter. I will show it to Mr. Strawn. He will be amused by it. Several of my friends have called me up about the picture. It's quite a joke already. Mr. Strawn will be amused."

Mr. Strawn looked as if he might be —by sudden death and disaster if it were on a large enough scale.

"I wonder why he said it was a picture of the La Forge woman?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Mr. Johnson, "unless—I can think of only one reason—it's not impossible. He and Kate La Forge were friends for a while."

"She was his mistress," Mrs. Strawn suggested.

"His friends knew of her, but none of them seems to have seen her. Possibly it was only natural that he should want his friends to think the photograph was that of Kate La Forge."

"Why?"

Mrs. Strawn was smiling merrily and alluringly at him. Mr. Johnson seldom found himself embarrassed, but he became the victim of that phenomenon as he was obliged to complete an explanation which had grown more awkward as he proceeded with it. The beautiful Mrs. Strawn leaned towards him, but Mr. Johnson noticed that her eyes did not join her lips in the smile.

"Why, Mr. Johnson?" she urged.

"I think the reason is obvious," Mr. Johnson stammered.

She laughed delightedly. Mr. Johnson was backing towards the door. Mrs. Strawn followed him. Mr. Strawn stood as he had been standing and was silent. Mrs. Strawn went into the hallway with Mr. Johnson and held out her hand as he opened the door.

"Good night, Mr. Johnson," she said. "I hope this explanation removes all your troubles. It is altogether unimportant to me and has amused Mr. Strawn very much."

As Mr. Johnson closed the door he heard her laughing. It was not mirthful. It was not hysterical. It was not forced. It was not natural. It caused Mr. Johnson to hope that it never would be his fortune to make a woman laugh that way at him or with him.

Mr. Johnson carried the photograph of Mrs. James Strawn, which he had brought into the office the night before as that of Kate La Forge, to the city editor.

"There's no trouble," he said. "It's Mrs. Strawn, all right; but there'll be no trouble. And I suggest you file that picture away carefully. We may need it again some of these days."

Mr. Johnson was a prophet.

THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS OF "THE PASSIONATE FRIENDS"

H G. WELLS, the biggest writer in England, believes that fathers can and should "keep their sons from wasting themselves so much." In this, his story of Stephen Stratton and the lovely Lady Mary Christian, Stratton sets down the record of their love and its consequences, for his little son to read and be guided by when he shall grow up. It is a strong plea for a broader divorce law in England.

Stratton shows his experience must teach that for all honest men and women, there can be no illicit loves or relations. "A woman must be content with the easy friendship of other women and of one man only; and a man must in the same way have one sole woman intimate; and there is no happiness or delight in the kiss or embrace that is not given with pride," he writes.

Stratton is the son of a poor curate. Lady Mary Christian is the daughter of one of the most aristocratic families in England. From childhood the two, with Lady Mary's brothers, Guy and Phillip, are thrown together at the Christian country home, Burnmore Park. The friendship of Stratton and Mary becomes love, the love of the shy, budding boy and girl. Then they are parted for three years.

When the two meet again Lady Mary is the well-poised young aristocrat, wooed by Justin, one of the richest and most powerful men in the Empire. Stratton begs her to marry him, but she refuses. She loves him but insists she wants to be a great and shining lady. Marrying a poor man would make of her a "squaw."

"But Justin will make love to you, Mary," Stratton cries. "Don't you understand? You will bear him children!"

"No," she says; "he promises, Stephen. I am to own myself."

Despite Stratton's protest, Lady Mary and Justin are married: and Stratton, in a frenzy of despair, goes to the Boer war. At the end of five years of notable service, he returns to find his father has succeeded to a fine estate, near Justin's.

Stratton meets Lady Mary at a dinner seven months after. "Meantime, I had met your mother," he says, in his story for his little son. He tells how, at the first meeting with Rachel

More, then a slender, large-eyed girl, he feels "another kind of love." He goes often to see Rachel.

After the dinner Stratton and Mary meet secretly, till in a few weeks they are passionately in love with each other. Justin's discovery follows.

Then Stratton pleads with Lady Mary's brothers, Phillip, who has become Lord Maxton, and Guy, and with her cousin, Lord Tarville, that they not stand in the way of Justin's divorcing Lady Mary so that he can marry her.

"It's something more than a private issue," explains Tarville, in answer for the three. "It's a question of policy. There've been too many divorces in society. Everybody is saying, 'Why don't these big people either set about respecting the law or altering it?' Common people are getting too infernally clear headed. We're a responsible class. We can't stand any more divorces."

Justin, furious at having been cheated, takes Lady Mary away to stop the whole affair. But Phillip, Mary's older brother, fights with Stratton at the club and says it is because Stratton is trying to pursue his sister. And so, suddenly, all London is gossiping over the story. Finally Stratton is allowed to say good-by to Lady Mary and is forced to agree to leave England for three years. He pleads for a divorce so that he and Lady Mary may marry. "It would be a clean sort of divorce," he urges. But he is made to see that in England, with money, social tradition and the law against it, he and Lady Mary would be flung into the ditch together. So he leaves Lady Mary, his once fearless playmate, crying as a child cries, his own face tear-wet, and goes out to exile.

He meets Rachel More in Germany, nearly three years later. She does not conceal her happiness in his presence. He also learns that Lady Mary has become the mother of two children. He goes to America and, six months later, with Lady Mary still in his heart, he writes to ask Rachel to marry him. They are married on his return to England. Stratton settles in business, and a boy and girl are born to them. Then one morning at breakfast, among other letters, Stratton sees one for him, addressed in the familiar hand of Lady Mary Justin.

A POWERFUL NOVEL by THE
GREATEST of THE
ENGLISH
WRITERS



The Lady
Mary of the
Old Days.

The Passionate Friends

By H. G. WELLS

Author of "Ann Veronica," "Mr. Polly," etc.

Illustrated By
John Newton Howitt

I sat with the letter from Lady Mary in my hand for a moment or so before I opened it, hesitating as one hesitates before a door that may reveal a dramatic situation. Then I pushed my chair a little back from the table and ripped the envelope.

It was a far longer letter than Mary had ever written me in the old days, and in a handwriting as fine as ever but now rather smaller. I have it still, and here I open its worn folds and, except for a few trifling omissions—just one there is that is not trifling, but that I must needs make. . . .

You will never see any of these letters, little son, because I shall destroy them as soon as this copy is made. It has been difficult—or I should have destroyed them before. But some things can be too hard for us. . . .

This first letter is on the Martens note-paper; its very heading is familiar to me. The handwriting of the earlier sentences is a little stiff and disjointed, and there are one or two scribbled obliterations; it is like some one embarrassed in speaking; and then it passes into her usual and characteristic ease. . . .

And as I read, slowly my long-cherished anger evaporated, and the real Mary, outspoken and simple, whom I had obscured by a cloud of fancied infidelities, returned to me.

"My dear Stephen," she began. "About six weeks ago I saw in the *Times* that you have a little daughter. It set me thinking, picturing you with a mite of a baby in your arms—what *little* things they are, Stephen!—and your old face bent over it, so that presently I went to my room and cried. It set me thinking about you so that I have at last written

you this letter.... I love to think of you with wife and children about you, Stephen,—I heard of your son for the first time about a year ago,—but—don't mistake me,—something wrings me too..

"Well, I too have children. Have you ever thought of me as a mother? I am. I wonder how much you know about me now. I have two children and the youngest is just two years old. And somehow it seems to me that now that you and I have both given such earnestness of our good behavior, such evidence that *that* side of life anyhow is effectually settled for us, there is no reason remaining why we shouldn't correspond. You are my brother, Stephen, and my friend and my twin and the core of my imagination; fifty babies cannot alter that.

"Too much of my life and being, Stephen, has been buried, and I am in rebellion. This is a breach of the tomb if you like, an irregular, private, premature resurrection from an interment in error. Out of my alleged grave I poke my head and say Hello! to you. Stephen, old friend! dear friend! how are you getting on? What is it like to you? How do you feel? I want to know about you.... I'm not doing this at all furtively, and you may write back to me, Stephen, as openly as your heart desires. I have told Justin I should do this. I rise, you see, blowing my own Trump. Let the other graves do as they please....

"Your letters will be respected, Stephen—if you choose to rise also and write me a letter.

"Stephen, I've been wanting to do this for—for all the time. If there was thought-reading you would have had a thousand letters. But formerly I was content to submit, and latterly I've chafed more. I think that as what they call passion has faded, the immense friendliness has become more evident, and made the bar less and less justifiable. You and I have had so much between us beyond what somebody the other day—it was in a report in the *Times*, I think—was calling *Materia Matrimoniala*. And of course I hear about you from all sorts of people, and in all sorts of ways—whatever you have done about me, I've had a woman's sense of honor about you and I've managed

to learn a great deal without asking forbidden questions. I've pricked up my ears at the faintest echo of your name.

"They say you have become a publisher with an American partner. And equally perplexing is your being mixed up in Peace Conferences and Social Reform Congresses and so forth. It's so—Carnegie-ish. Why haven't you come into the political game? I'd hoped it if only for the sake of meeting you again. What are you doing out beyond there?

"We are in it so far as I can contrive. But I contrive very little. We are pillars of the Conservative party—on that, Justin's mind is firmly settled—and every now and then I clamor urgently that we must do more for it. But Justin's ideas go no further than writing checks—doing more for the Party means writing a bigger check—and there are moments when I feel we shall simply bring down a peerage upon our heads and bury my ancient courtesy title under the ignominy of a new creation. He would certainly accept it.

"Justin writes his check and turns back at the earliest opportunity to his miniature gardens and the odd little freaks of collecting that attract him.

"Have you ever heard of chintz oil jars? 'No,' you will say. Nor has anyone else yet, except our immediate circle of friends and a few dealers who are no doubt industriously increasing the present scanty supply. We possess three. They are matronly shaped jars about two feet or a yard high, of a kind of terracotta with wooden tops surmounted by gilt acorns, and they have been covered with white paint and on this, flowers and birds and figures from some very rich old chintz have been stuck very cunningly, and then everything has been varnished—and there you are.

"Our first and best was bought for seven-and-sixpence, brought home in the car, put upon a console table on the second landing and worshiped. It's really a very pleasant, mellow thing to see. Nobody had ever seen the like. Guests, syco-phantic people of all sorts, were taken to consider it. It was looked at with heads at every angle—one man even kept his head erect and one went a little upstairs and looked at it under his arm. Also the

most powerful lenses have been used for a minute examination, and one expert licked the varnish and looked extremely doubtful and wise at me as he turned the booty over his gifted tongue.

"And now, God being with us, we mean to possess every specimen in existence—before the Americans get hold of the idea. Yesterday Justin got up and motored sixty miles to look at an alleged fourth.

"Oh, my dear! I am writing chatter. You perceive I've reached the chattering stage. It is the fated end of the clever woman in a good social position nowadays: her mind beats against her conditions for the last time and breaks up into this carping talk, this spume of observation and comment, this anecdotal natural history of the restraining husband, as waves burst out their hearts in a foam upon a reef. But it isn't chatter I want to write to you.

"Stephen, I'm intolerably wretched. No creature has ever been gladder to have been born than I was for the first five and twenty years of my life. I was full of hope and I was full, I suppose, of vanity and rash confidence. I thought I was walking on solid earth with my head reaching up to the clouds, and that sea and sky and all mankind were mine for the smiling. And I am nothing and worse than nothing; I am the ineffectual mother of two children, a daughter whom I adore—but of her I may not tell you—and a son—a son who is too like his father for any fury of worship, a stolid little creature.... That is all I have done in the world, a mere blink of maternity—and my blue Persian, who is scarcely two years old, has already had nine kittens.

"My husband and I have never forgiven each other the indefinable wrong of not pleasing each other; that embitters more and more; to take it out of each other is our rôle; I have done my duty to the great new line of Justin by giving it the heir it needed, and now a polite and silent separation has fallen between us. We hardly speak except in company.

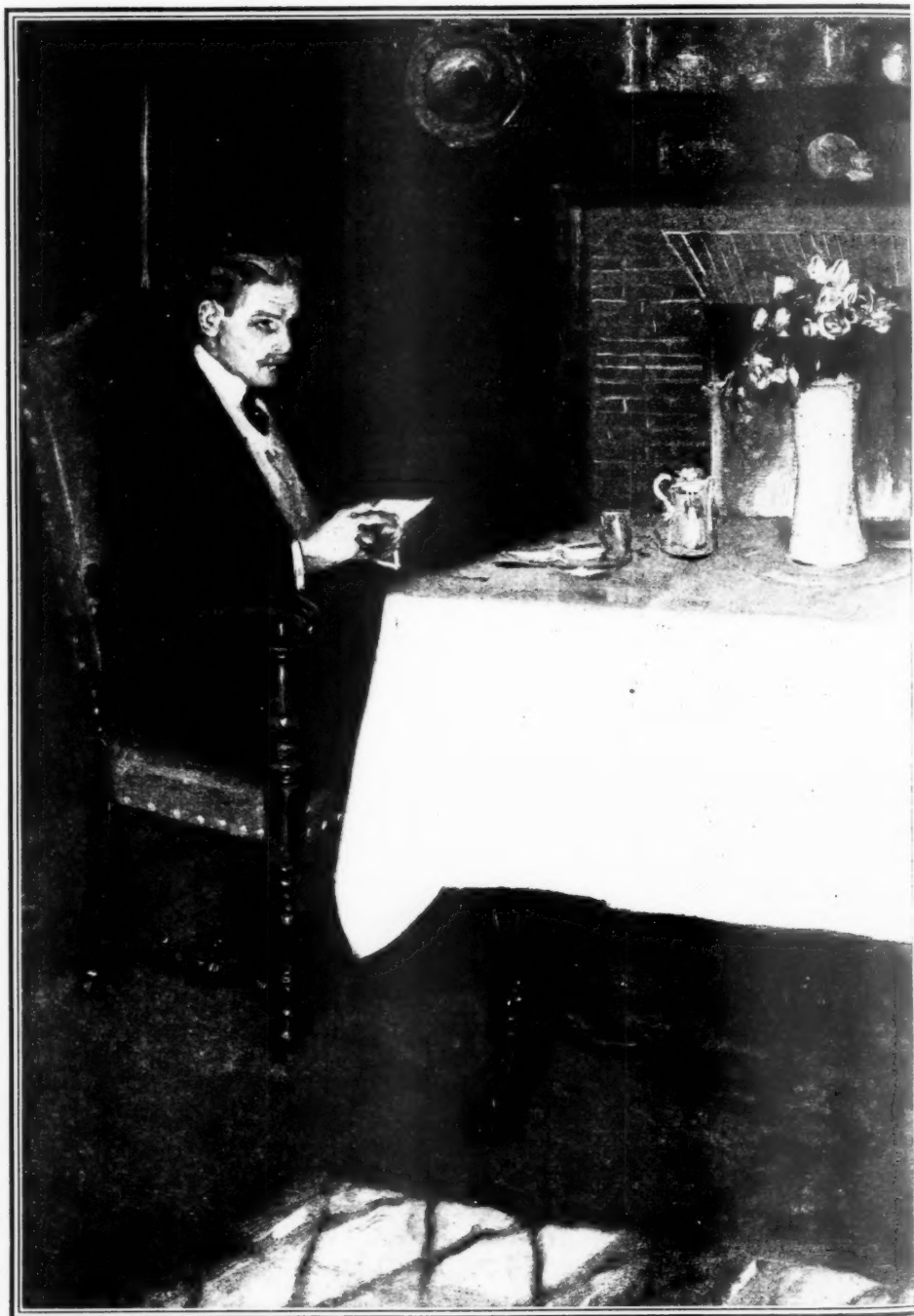
"I have not been so much married, Stephen, I find, as collected, like some rare vase, and since our tragic misad-

venture—but there were beautiful moments, Stephen, unforgettable glimpses of beauty in that; thank God, I say impenitently for that—the door of the expensively splendid cabinet that contains me, when it is not locked, is very discreetly—watched. I have no men friends, no social force, no freedom to take my line. My husband is my official obstacle. We barb the limitations of life for one another.

"A little while ago he sought to chasten me—to rouse me rather—through jealousy, and made me aware indirectly but a little defiantly of a young person of artistic gifts in whose dramatic career he was pretending a conspicuous interest. I was jealous and roused, but scarcely in the way he desired. 'This,' I said quite cheerfully, 'means freedom for me, Justin,'—and the young woman vanished from the visible universe with an incredible celerity. I hope she was properly paid off and not simply made away with by a minion, but I become more and more aware of my ignorance of a great financier's methods as I become more and more aware of them....

"Stephen, my dear, my brother, I am intolerably unhappy. I do not know what to do with myself, or what there is to hope for in life. I am like a prisoner in a magic cage and I do not know the word that will release me. How is it with you? Are you unhappy beyond measure or are you not; and if you are not, what are you doing with life? Have you found any secret that makes living tolerable and understandable? Write to me, write to me at least and tell me that.... Please write to me.

"Do you remember how long ago you and I sat in the old Park at Burnmore, and how I kept pestering you and asking you what is all this *for*? And you looked at the question as an obstinate mule looks at a narrow bridge he could cross but doesn't want to. Well, Stephen, you've had nearly—how many years is it now?—to get an answer ready. What is it all for? What do you make of it? Never mind my particular case, or the case of Women with a capital W; tell me *your* solution. You are active, you keep doing things, you find life worth



I read the letter to the end and looked up, and there was my home about me, a room ruddy-brown and inquiry in her eyes. "It is a



familiar . . . Rachel sat at the other end of the table, a young mother, fragile and tender-eyed. I met the letter from Mary Justin," I said.

living. Is publishing a way of peace for the heart? I am prepared to believe even that. But justify yourself. Tell me what you have got there to keep your soul alive."

I read this letter to the end and looked up, and there was my home about me, a room ruddy-brown and familiar, with the row of old pewter things upon the dresser, the steel engravings of former Strattons that came to me from my father, a convex mirror exaggerating my upturned face. And Rachel, just risen again, sat at the other end of the table, a young mother, fragile and tender-eyed. The clash of these two systems of reality was amazing. It was as though I had not been parted from Mary for a day, as though all that separation and all that cloud of bitter jealousy had been a mere silence between two people in the same room. Indeed it was extraordinarily like that, as if I had been sitting at a desk, imagining myself alone, reading my present life as one reads in a book at a shaded lamp, and then suddenly that silent other had spoken.

And then I looked at the page of my life before me and became again a character in the story.

I met the inquiry in Rachel's eyes. "It is a letter from Mary Justin," I said.

She did not answer for a few moments. She became interested in the flame of the little spirit lamp that kept her coffee hot. She finished what she had to do with that and then remarked, "I thought you two were not to correspond."

"Yes," I said, putting the letter down, "that was the understanding."

There was a little interval of silence, and then I got up and went to the fireplace where the bacon and sausages stood upon a trivet.

"I suppose," said Rachel, "she wants to hear from you again."

"She thinks that now we have children, and that she has two, we can consider what was past, past and closed and done with, and she wants to hear—about me. . . . Apart from everything else—we were very great friends."

"Of course," said Rachel with lips a little awry. "of course. You must have

been great friends. And it's natural for her to write."

"I suppose," she added, "her husband knows."

"She's told him, she says. . . ."

Her eye fell on the letter in my hand for the smallest fraction of a second, and it was as if hastily she snatched away a thought from my observation. I had a moment of illuminating embarrassment. So far, we had contrived to do as most young people do when they marry: we had sought to make our lives unreservedly open to one another; we had affected an entire absence of concealments about our movements, our thoughts.

If perhaps I had been largely silent to her about Mary it was not so much that I sought to hide things from her as that I myself sought to forget. It is one of the things that we learn too late, the impossibility of any such rapid and willful coalescences of souls. But we had maintained a convention of infinite communism since our marriage; we had shown each other our letters as a matter of course, shared the secrets of our friends, gone everywhere together as far as we possibly could.

I wanted now to give her the letter in my hand to read—and to do so was manifestly impossible. Something had arisen between us that made out of our unity two abruptly separated figures masked and veiled. Here were things I knew and understood completely and that I could not even describe to Rachel. What would she make of Mary's "Write to me. Write to me?" A mere wish to resume? . . . I would not risk the exposure of Mary's mind and heart and unhappiness to her possible misinterpretation. . . .

That letter fell indeed like a pitiless searchlight into all that region of differences ignored, over which we had built the vaulted convention of our complete mutual understanding. In my memory it seems to me now as though we hung silent for quite a long time over the evasions that were there so abruptly revealed.

Then I put the letter into my pocket with a clumsy assumption of carelessness, and knelt down to the fender and sausages.

"It will be curious," I said, "to write to her again.... To tell her about things...."

And then with immense interest, "Are these Chichester sausages you've got here, Rachel, or some new kind?"

Rachel roused herself to respond with an equal affectation, and we made an eager conversation about bacon and sausages—for after that startling gleam of divergence we were both anxious to get back to the superficialities of life again.

I DID not answer Mary's letter for seven or eight days.

During that period my mind was full of her to the exclusion of every other interest. I re-read all that she had to say many times, and with each reading the effect of her personality deepened. It was all so intensely familiar, the flashes of insight, the blazing frankness, the quick turns of thought, and her absurd confidence in a sort of sane stupidity that she had always insisted upon my possessing. Her quick, unembarrassed affectionateness! Her quick, irregular writing seemed to bring back with it the changing light in her eyes, the intonations of her voice, something of her gesture....

I did not go on discussing with myself whether we two ought to correspond; that problem disappeared from my thoughts. Her challenge to me to justify myself took possession of my mind. That thrust towards self-examination was the very essence of her ancient influence. How did I justify myself? I was under a peculiar compulsion to answer that to her satisfaction. She had picked me up out of my work and accumulating routines with that demand, made me look at myself and my world again as a whole....

I do not remember at all clearly what I wrote to her. It has disappeared from existence. But it was certainly a long letter. In some summary phrasing I must have set out the gist of my aims and my beliefs. I must have explained my sense of the supreme importance of mental clarification in human life. All this is manifest in her reply. And I think too I did my best to tell her plainly the faith

that was in me, and why life seemed worth while to me....

Her second letter came after an interval of only a few days from the despatch of mine. She began abruptly.

"When I read your letter first, Stephen, it was like looking at a man in profile and finding him solid and satisfactory, and then afterwards walking 'round that person and finding his left side wasn't there—with everything perfect on the right, down to the buttons. You've planned out your understandings and tolerances and inquiries and clearings-up as if the world were all just men—or citizens—and nothing doing but racial and national and class prejudices and the exacting and shirking of labor, and you seem to ignore altogether that man is a sexual animal first—first, Stephen, first—that he has that in common with all the animals, that it made him, indeed, because he has it more than they have—and after that, a long way after that, he is the labor-economizing, war-and-feud-making creature you make him out to be. A long way after that....

"Man is the most sexual of all the beasts, Stephen. Half of him, woman-kind, rather more than half, isn't simply human at all: it's specialized, specialized for the young, not only naturally and physically as animals are, but mentally and artificially. Womankind isn't human; it's reduced human. It's 'the sex' as the Victorians used to say, and from the point of view of the *Lxy Julia* and the point of view of Mr. Malthus, and the point of view of biologists and saints and artists and everyone who deals in feeling and emotion—and from the point of view of all us poor specialists, smothered up in our clothes and restrictions—the future of the sex is the center of the whole problem of the human future, about which you are concerned.

"All this great world-state of your man's imagination is going to be wrecked by us if you ignore us: we women are going to be the Goths and Huns of another Decline and Fall. We are going to sit in the conspicuous places of the world and *loot* all your patient accumulations. We are going to abolish your offspring and turn the princes among

you into undignified slaves. Because, you see, specialized as we are, we are not quite specialized: we are specialized under duress, and at the first glimpse of a chance we abandon our cradles and drop our pots and pans and go for the vast and elegant side possibilities—of our specialization. Out we come, looking for the fun the men are having. Dress us, feed us, play with us! We'll pay you in excitement—tremendous excitement.

"The State indeed! All your little triumphs of science and economy, all your little accumulations of wealth that you think will presently make the struggle for life an old story and the millennium possible—we *spend*. And all your dreams of brotherhood!—we will set you by the ears. We hold ourselves up as my little nephews—Philip's boys—do some coveted object, and say 'Who?' and the whole brotherhood shouts 'I' to the challenge. . . . Back you go into Individualism at the word and all your Brotherhood crumbles to dust again.

"How are you going to remedy it? How are you going to protect that Great State of your dreams from this anti-citizenship of sex? You give no hint.

"You are planning nothing, Stephen, nothing to meet this. You are fighting with an army all looting and undisciplined, frantic with the private jealousies that center about *us*, and you are giving out orders for an army of saints. You treat us as a negligible quantity, and we are about as negligible as a fire in the woodwork of a house that is being built. . . .

"I read what I have written, Stephen, and I perceive I have the makings of a fine scold in me. Perhaps under happier conditions. . . . I should certainly have scolded you, constantly, continually. . . . Never did a man so need scolding. . . . And like any self-respecting woman I see that I use half my words in the wrong meanings in order to emphasize my point.

"Of course when I write *woman*, in all that has gone before, I don't mean woman. It is a woman's privilege to talk or write incomprehensibly and insist upon being understood. So that I expect you already to understand that what I mean isn't that men are creative and un-

selfish and brotherly and so forth, and that women are spoiling and going to spoil the game—although and notwithstanding that is exactly what I have written—but that humans are creative and unselfish *et cetera* and so forth, and that it is their sexual, egotistical, passionate side (which is ever so much bigger relatively in a woman than in a man—and that is why I wrote as I did) which is going to upset your noble and beautiful apple-cart.

"But it is not only that by nature we are more largely and gravely and importantly sexual than men, but that men have shifted the responsibility for attraction and passion upon us and made us pay in servitude and restriction and blame for the defect of all the species.

"What are you going to do with us? I gather from a hint rather than accept as a statement that you propose to give us votes.

"Stephen!—do you really think that we are going to bring anything to bear upon public affairs worth having? I know something of the contemporary feminine intelligence. Justin makes no serious objection to a large and various circle of women friends, and over my little sitting-room fire in the winter and in my corners of our various gardens in the summer and in walks over the heather at Martens and in Scotland, there are great talks and confessions of love, of mental freedom, of ambitions, and belief and unbelief—more particularly of unbelief.

"I have sometimes thought of compiling a dictionary of unbelief, a great list of the things that a number of sweet, submissive, value-above-rubies wives have told me they did not believe in. It would amaze their husbands beyond measure.

"The state of mind of women about these things, Stephen, is dreadful—I mean about all these questions—you know what I mean. The bold striving spirits do air their views a little, and always in a way that makes one realize how badly they need airing—but most of the nicer women are very chary of talk; they have to be drawn out; a hint of opposition makes them start back or prevaricate, and I see them afterwards

with their husbands, pretty, silken, furry, feathery, jeweled *silences*.

"But all their suppression doesn't keep them orthodox; it only makes them furtive and crumpled and creased in their minds—in just the way that things get crumpled and creased if they are always being shoved back into a drawer. You have only to rout about in their minds for a bit. They pretend at first to be quite correct, and then out comes the nasty little courage of the darkness. Sometimes there is even an apologetic titter. They are quite emancipated, they say; I have misunderstood them. Their emancipation is like those horrid white lizards that grow in the Kentucky caves out of the sunlight. They tell you they don't see why they shouldn't do this or that—mean things, underhand things, cheap, vicious, sensual things....

"And then comes a situation that really tries their quality.... Think of the quandary I got into with you, Stephen. And for my sex I'm rather a daring person. The way in which I went so far—and then ran away. I had a kind of excuse—in my illness. That illness! Such a queer, untimely, feminine illness....

"We're all to pieces, Stephen. That's what brought down Rome. The women went to pieces then, and the women are going to pieces to-day. What's the good of having your legions in the Grampians and marching up to Philae, while the wives are talking treason in your houses?

"It's no good telling us to go back to the Ancient Virtues. The Ancient Virtues haven't *kept*. The Ancient Virtues in an advanced state of decay are what was the matter with Rome and what is the matter with us. You can't tell a woman to go back to the spinning-wheel and the kitchen and the cradle, when you have power-looms, French cooks, hotels, restaurants and modern nurseries. We've overflowed. We've got to go on to a lot of New Virtues. And in all the prospect before me—I can't describe one clear, simple thing to do....

"But I'm running on. I want to know, Stephen, why you've got nothing to say about all this. It must have been staring you in the face ever since I spent my

very considerable superfluous energies in wrecking your career. Because you know I wrecked it, Stephen. I *knew* I was wrecking it and I wrecked it. I knew exactly what I was doing all the time. I had meant to be so fine a thing for you, a mothering friend, to have that dear, consecutive, kindly mind of yours steadying mine, to have seen you grow to power over men, me helping, me admiring. It was to have been so fine. So fine!

"Didn't I urge you to marry Rachel, make you talk of her? Don't you remember that? And one day when I saw you thinking of Rachel, saw a kind of pride in your eyes!—suddenly I couldn't stand it. I went to my room after you had gone and thought of you and her until I wanted to scream. I couldn't bear it. It was intolerable. I was violent to my toilet things, I broke a hand-glass. Your dignified, selfish, self-controlled Mary *smashed* a silver hand-mirror. I never told you that. You know what followed. I pounced on you and took you. Wasn't I a soft and scented hawk? Was either of us better than some creature of instinct that does what it does because it must?

"It was like a gust of madness—and I cared. I found, no more for your career than I cared for any other little thing, for honor, for Rachel, for Justin, that stood between us....

"My dear, wasn't all that time, all that heat and hunger of desire, all that secret futility of passion, the very essence of the situation between men and women now? We are all trying most desperately to be human beings, to walk erect, to work together, to share what you call a common collective thought that shall rule mankind, and this tremendous force which seizes us and says to us: 'Make that other being yours, bodily yours, mentally yours, wholly yours—at any price, no matter the price,' bars all our unifications. It splits the whole world into couples watching each other. All our laws, all our customs seem the servants of that. It is the passion of the body swamping the brain; it's an ape that has seized a gun, a beautiful modern gun.

"Here am I, Justin's captive, and he

mine, he mine because at the first escape of his I get my liberty. Here are we two, you and I, barred forever from the sight of one another, and you and I writing—I at any rate—in spite of the ill-concealed resentment of my partner. We're just two, peeping through our bars, of a universal multitude. Everywhere this prison of sex.

"Have you ever thought just all that it means when every woman in the world goes dressed in a costume to indicate her sex? She has her hair grown long to its longest because man's is short, and everything conceivable is done to emphasize and remind us (and you) of the fundamental trouble between us? As if there was need of reminding!

"Stephen, is there no way out of this? Is there no way at all? Because if there is not, then I had rather go back to the harem than live as I do now, imprisoned in glass—with all of life in sight of me and none in reach—I had rather Justin beat me into submission and mental tranquility and that I bore him an annual—probably deciduous—child. I can understand so well now that feminine attitude that implies, 'Well, if I must have a master, then the more master the better.'

"I'm pouring into these letters, Stephen, the concentrated venom of years of brooding. My heart is black with rebellion against my lot and against the lot of woman. I was given life and a fine position in the world. I made one fatal blunder in marrying to make these things secure, and now I can do nothing with it all and I have nothing to do with it.

"It astounds me to think of the size of our establishments, Stephen, of the extravagant way in which whole counties and great countries pay tribute to pile up the gigantic heap of wealth upon which we two lead our lives of futile entanglement. In this place alone there are fourteen gardeners and garden helps, and this is not one of our garden places. Three weeks ago I spent a thousand pounds on clothes in one great week of shopping, and our yearly expenditure upon personal effects, upon our magnificence and our margins cannot be greatly less than fifty thousand pounds.

"I walk about our house and gardens; I take one of the carriages or one of the automobiles and go to some large, pointless gathering, and we walk about and say empty little things, and the servants don't laugh at us, the butlers don't laugh at us, the people in the street tolerate us.... It has an effect of collective insanity....

"If all this isn't nonsense, tell me what it is. For me, at any rate, it's nonsense, and for every intelligent woman about me—for I talk to some of them; we indulge in seditious whisperings and wit—and there isn't one who seems to have been able to get anything more solid than I have done. Each of us has had her little fling at maternity—about as much as a washerwoman does in her odd time every two or three years—and that is our uttermost reality. All the rest—trimmings! We go about the world, Stephen, dressing and meeting each other with immense ceremony. We have our seasonal movements in relation to the ritual of politics and sport. We play games to amuse the men who keep us—not a woman would play a game for its own sake. We dabble with social reform and politics, for which few of us care a rap except as an occupation. We 'discover' artists or musicians or lecturers. (As though we cared!) We try to believe in lovers or, still harder, try to believe in old or new religions, and most of us—I don't—do our best to give the gratifications and exercise the fascinations that are expected of us....

"Something has to be done for women, Stephen. We are the heart of life, birth and begetting, the home where the future grows, and your schemes ignore us and slide about over the superficialities of things. We are spoiling the whole process of progress; we are turning all the achievements of mankind to nothingness. Men invent, create, do miracles with the world, and we translate it all into shopping, into a glitter of dresses and households, into an immense parade of pride and excitement. We excite men; we stir them to get us and keep us. Men turn from their ideas of brotherhood to elaborate our separate cages....

"I am Justin's wife—not a thing in

my heavens or my earth that is not subordinated to that.

"Something has to be done for women, Stephen, something—urgently—and nothing is done until that is done, some release from their intolerable subjection to sex, so that for us everything else in life, respect, freedom, social standing, is entirely secondary to that.

"But what has to be done? We women do not know. Our efforts to know are among the most desolating of spectacles. I read the papers of those suffrage women; the effect is more like agitated geese upon a common than anything human has a right to be.... That's why I turn to you. In the old days I used to turn to you and shake your mind and make you think about things you seemed too sluggish to think about without my clamor. Once—do you remember?—at Martens, I shook you by the ears.... And when I made you think, you thought, as I could never do. Think now—about women.

"Perhaps mankind is so constituted, that badly as they get along now they couldn't get along at all if they let women go free and have their own way with life. Perhaps you can't have *two* sexes loose together; you must shut up one.

"Oh bother it all, Stephen! Where's your mind in these matters? Why haven't you tackled these things? Why do you leave it to *me* to dig these questions into you—like opening a reluctant oyster? Aren't they patent? You up and answer them, Stephen—or this correspondence will become abusive...."

IT was true that I did ignore or minimize sexual questions as much as I could. I was forced now to think why I did this. That carried me back to those old days of passion, memories I had never stirred for many years. And I wrote to Mary that there was indeed no reason but a reasonable fear, that in fact I had dismissed them because they had been beyond my patience and self-control, because I could not think very much about them without an egotistical reservation to the bitterness of my own case. And in avoiding them I was only doing what the great bulk of men in business

and men in affairs find themselves obliged to do. They train themselves not to think of the rights and wrongs of sexual life, not to tolerate liberties even in their private imaginations. They know it is like carrying a torch into a powder magazine. They feel they cannot trust their own minds beyond the experience, tested usages, and conventions of the ages, because they know how many of those who have ventured further have been blinded by mists and clouds of rhetoric, lost in inexplicable puzzles and wrecked disastrously. There in those half explored and altogether unsettled Hinterlands, lurk desires that sting like adders and hatreds cruel as hell....

And then I went on to urge upon her that our insoluble puzzles were not necessarily insoluble puzzles for the world at large, that no one soldier fights anything but a partial battle.

"There you are," Mary answered, with something like elation; "there is a tiger in the garden and you won't talk or think about it for fear of growing excited. That is my grievance against so much historical and political and social discussion: its hopeless futility because of its hopeless omissions. You plan the world's future, taking the women and children for granted, with Egotistical Sex, as you call it, a prowling monster upsetting everything you do...."

Altogether Mary wrote me twenty-two letters, and I one or two more than that number to her. Those letters spread over a space of nearly two and a half years.

Here is a page of the peculiar doubt that was characteristic of her. It gives just that pessimistic touch that tempered her valiant adventurousness.

"Have you ever thought, Stephen, that perhaps these (repressionist) people are more nearly right than you—that if the woman gets free she won't furl her sex and stop disturbing things. Suppose she *is* wicked as a sex, suppose she *will* trade on her power of exciting imaginative men. A lot of these new women run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, beguile some poor innocent of a man to ruin them and then call in fathers, brothers, husbands, friends, chivalry, all the rest of it, and make the best of both sides of a sex.



There stood Lady Mary, real and solid, a little unfamiliar in her tweeds and with her shining eyes into Summersley Satchel. She remained



mate and unforgettable. And bracing us both, and holding back our emotion was, quite unmistakably, Miss seated and regarding me—intelligently.

"Suppose we go on behaving like that? After we've got all our emancipation? Suppose you are just tumbling the contents of the grate into the middle of the room. Then all this emancipation *is* a decay, even as conservative-minded people say,—it's none the less a decay because we want it,—and the only way to stop it is to stop it, and to have more discipline and more suppression and say to women: 'Back to the Sterner Virtues!'"

And then towards the second year her letters began to break away from her preoccupation with her position as a woman and to take up new aspects of life, more general aspects of life altogether. It had an effect not of her having exhausted the subject but as if, despairing of a direct solution, she turned deliberately to the relief of other considerations.

For a gap of nearly four months neither of us had anything to say in a letter at all. I think that in time our correspondence might have died away altogether. Then she wrote again in a more familiar strain to tell me of certain definite changes of relationship and outlook. She said that the estrangement between herself and Justin had increased during the past year, that they were going to live practically apart, she for the most part in the Surrey house where her two children lived with their governesses and maid. But also she meant to snatch weeks and seasons for travel. Upon that they had been disputing for some time. "I know it is well with the children," she wrote; "why should I be in perpetual attendance? I do nothing for them except an occasional kiss, or half an hour's romping. Why should one pretend?"

"Justin and I have wrangled over this question of going away, for weeks, but at last feminine persistence has won. I am going to travel in my own fashion and see the world—with periodic appearances at his side in London and Scotland. We have agreed at least on one thing, and that is upon a companion; she is to be my secretary in title, my moral guarantor in fact, and her name, which is her crowning glory, is Stella Summersley Satchel. She is blonde, erect,

huffy-mannered and thoroughly up to both sides of her work. I partly envy her independence and rectitude—partly only. It's odd and quite inconsistent of me that I don't envy her altogether. In theory I insist that a woman should not have charm—it is our undoing. But when I meet one without it—!

"I shall also trail a maid. Justin cannot, he says, have his wife abroad with merely a companion; people would talk; maid it must be, as well. And so in a week or less I shall start, unusually tailor-made, for South Germany and all that jolly country, companioned and maided. I shall tramp—on the feet God has given me—in stout boots. Miss Summersley Satchel marches, I understand, like the British infantry but on a vegetarian 'basis,'—fancy calling your nourishment a 'basis!'"

AFTER the letter containing that announcement she wrote to me twice again, once from Oban and then after a long interval, from Siena. The former was a scornfully minute description of the English at their holidays and how the conversation went among the women after dinner. "They are like a row of Japanese lanterns, all blown out long ago and swinging about in a wind," she wrote—an extravagant image that yet conveys something of the large, empty, unilluminating effect of a sort of social intercourse very vividly. In the second letter she was concerned chiefly with the natural beauty of Italy and how latterly she had thrice wept at beautiful things.

"All up the hillside before the window as I write, the herbage is thick with anemones. I have been sitting and looking at them for the better part of an hour, loving them more and then more, and the sweet sunlight that is on them and in among them.... How marvelous are these things, Stephen! All these little exquisite things that are so abundant in the world, the gleaming lights and blossoms, the drifting scents! It is as if God, who is so stern and high, so terrible to all our appeals, took pity for a moment and saw fit to speak very softly and tenderly...."

That was the last letter I was ever to have from her.

CHAPTER XI

The Meeting.

THE next August (1911) I was very much run down. I had been staying in London through almost intolerably hot weather to attend a Races Congress that had greatly disappointed me. I wanted a holiday badly, and I felt unable to go away for any length of time. So I snatched at ten days in the Swiss mountains. A tour with some taciturn guide involving a few middling climbs and glacier excursions seemed the best way of recuperating. I had never had any time for Switzerland since my first exile there years ago. I took the advice of a man in the club whose name I now forget—and went up to the Schwarzegg Hut above Grindelwald, and over the Strahlegg to the Grimsel.

When I had four days before I must go on to a Conference of Peace Societies I planned to attend in Milan, I decided to take one more mountain. I slept at the Stein Inn, and started in the morning to do that agreeable first mountain of all, the Titlis, whose shining, genial head attracted me. I did not think a guide necessary, but a boy took me up by a track near Gadmen, and left me to my Siegfried map some way up the great ridge of rocks that overlooks the Engstlen Alp. I a little over-estimated my mountaineering, and it came about that I was benighted while I was still high above the Joch Pass on my descent. Some of this was steep and needed caution. I had to come down slowly with my folding lantern, in which a reluctant candle went out at regular intervals, and I did not reach the little inn at Engstlen Alp until long after eleven at night. By that time I was very tired and hungry.

They told me I was lucky to get a room, only one stood vacant; I should certainly not have enjoyed sleeping on a billiard table after my day's work, and I ate a hearty supper, smoked for a time, and went wearily to bed.

But I could not sleep. I fell into an inconsecutive review of my life that

touched every endeavor with the pale tints of failure. And as that flow of melancholy reflection went on, it was shot more and more frequently with thoughts of Mary. It was not a discursive thinking about Mary, but a definite fixed direction of thought towards her. I had not so thought of her for many years. I wanted her, I felt, to come to me and help me out of this distressful pit into which my spirit had fallen. I believed she could. I perceived our separation as an irreparable loss. She had a harder, clearer quality than I, a more assured courage, a readier, surer movement of the mind. Always she had "lift" for me. And then I had a curious impression that I had heard her voice calling my name, as one might call out in one's sleep. I dismissed it as an illusion, and then I heard it again—so clearly that I sat up and listened, breathless.

Mixed up with all this was the intolerable uproar and talking of a little cascade not fifty yards from the hotel. It is curious how distressing that clamor of running water, which is so characteristic of the Alpine night, can become. At last those sounds can take the likeness of any voice whatever. The water, I decided, had called to me; now it mocked me...

The next morning I descended at some late hour by Swiss reckoning, and discovered two ladies in the morning sunlight awaiting breakfast at a little green table. One rose slowly at the sight of me, and stood and surveyed me with a glad amazement.

There stood Lady Mary, real and solid, a little unfamiliar in her tweeds and with her shining eyes intimate and unforgettable, as though I had never ceased to see them for all those intervening years. And bracing us both and holding back our emotion was, quite unmistakably, Miss Summersley Satchel, a blonde, business-like young woman with a stumpy nose very cruelly corrugated and inflamed by a pince-nez that savagely did much more than its duty by its name. She remained seated, pushing herself back from the table and regarding me—intelligently.

The concluding installment of "The Passionate Friends" will be in the January Red Book, on all news-stands December 23rd.



Signor
Paolo
Jones

The Baby Exchange

By MARY IMLAY TAYLOR

Author of "Pink Lollypops," etc.

Illustrated by B. Cory Kilvert

GEMMA rose early in the morning and peeped out of the Orphans' Home window. Her heart fluttered with alternate hope and fear. For it was sunrise and there was a fog. It might be New Haven railroad smoke and it might be sea mist. But if it rained—

Gemma clung to the window-sill and gazed skyward. Through the soft clouds she saw a strip of blue. Undoubtedly it was blue, and it was big enough to make a Dutchman a pair of breeches. The little Italian girl had never heard this classic apothegm, but her heart thrilled with hope, not for the mythical Dutchman, but for the Orphans' Home picnic. A fair day meant the annual picnic at Lighthouse Point; if it rained, the affair would be postponed a day, perhaps two.

The memory of the last picnic, a year ago, still lingered in Gemma's soul: it was a beautiful medley of pink-iced cake, sardines, lollypops and a brass band. Nothing that had ever happened before in her life, or since, had approached it in splendor, in heat, and in the after effects. Even a mustard plaster had points when it recalled the ecstasy of that unearthly repast in the blistering sun of July, with iced lemonade and—a straw! And, if the sun shone to-day, there would be another picnic, more pink icing, more sardines, more lollypops, and undoubtedly more results.

Gemma leaned out of the window, her small, pale face pinched with anxiety. The white mist of daybreak was turning a dirty yellow, and she heard an oriole whistling to his mate. Then the blue overhead widened and deepened until it

was almost violet. Gemma drew a long breath—the sun was rising, and *it was going to clear!* She shut her eyes. Before her mental vision passed a row of trolley cars marked "Special" and in the front one was a brass band, and in the last—

Gemma started violently; she heard the door open and shut; Sister Mary Beatrice was coming through the dormitory. Gemma's small, night-gowned figure slipped hastily back into her little cot. She lay quite still and, quite unaccountably, she felt guilty. Perhaps it was a premonition.

Sister Mary Beatrice stopped on her way. Gemma had shut her eyes tight, but the Sister was not deceived.

"Gemma," she said quietly, "when you're awake open your eyes. To-day, at the picnic, you will have especial charge of Paul Jones. Get up now and dress."

"Yes, m'm," said Gemma. "Pleze m'm, I'd rather nod have Signor Paolo Jones."

Sister Mary Beatrice looked at her in mild surprise. "Why not?" she asked gently.

"Pleze m'm, he bites."

Sister Mary Beatrice looked strange for a moment; then she walked on. "We must teach him not to be so wicked," she said, and went out and shut the door.

Gemma sighed. "I loves bambini," she said, lacing her shoes, "but nod when thev bites."

However, she forgot even Paul Jones' peculiar propensities in the excitement that followed. All the other small occupants of the dormitory were up now and hurrying on their picnic clothes. There was a subdued clamor of childish voices and a hasty scramble after shoes and stockings.

"We're going sure!"

"Aint you glad?"

"Please tie my pigtails."

"Gemma, you're buttoned all crooked, aint you?"

Gemma tried to look over her own lean little shoulder. Then she glanced at Mary Florinda. "Egscuse," she said mildly. "but you are nod meeting at the middle center. Me, I will join you eef you buttons me straight."

Mary Florinda backed up and had her

skirt buttoned on to her waist; then she unbuttoned and straightened Gemma's frock.

"Who's going with you?" she asked, a pin in her mouth.

Gemma sighed. "Signor Paolo Jones," she said weakly.

"Land, aint I glad it aint me!" Mary Florinda put the pin firmly in Gemma's collar. "If it was me, I'd just screech. He's awful mean, if he is little."

Gemma sighed again, her eyes wistful. "I don' mind ad all, 'cept when he bites," she said sadly. "I love bambini."

Mary Florinda eyed her. "Gemma," she said, in a hoarse whisper, "some of the girls say you're awful queer. Are you?"

Gemma raised soft, dark eyes to Mary's face; her lip quivered, but she did not answer, for at that very moment Sister Mary Beatrice called them to prayers. In the chapel, Gemma dropped to her knees with a thrill of happiness. She was going—going to the second picnic of her life, and she was going to be good all the way through, even if Paul Jones bit!

This exalted mood continued when they finally filed out the main door of the Orphans' Home, two and two, Sister Mary Beatrice leading and Sister Theresa bringing up the rear. It was like moving a small army under its captains, to take out the whole home at once.

There were the boys in their gray suits and their big dark blue collars, and the girls were all dressed alike in dark blue with little red pipings and flat, serviceable, exceedingly ugly hats. The very little ones were led by the larger girls and boys, and Gemma found herself in charge of the famous "Signor Paolo Jones." But not even that dread responsibility quelled her joy. There had been so few festivals in Gemma's life that she fairly thrilled and pulsated with delight. In her eyes the sober city streets assumed a new and fascinating aspect, and the graceful elms on the Green were strangely beautiful; the pigeons looked like doves and the peanut-vendor was a fairy prince.

Her dream was realized; lined up on the south side of the Green were three

open trolley cars, and on the front of each hung a large black placard with the words "Special Car" in white letters on it, and oh, joy of joys! there was a brass band! It occupied three front seats in the first car, and it was playing "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Gemma drew a long breath and lifted Paul Jones up beside her; she had the end seat in the row, and the rest of the children were climbing in and getting their places. Sister Mary Beatrice hurried them, for a long row of cars waited for theirs to move, and some irreverent motormen were pounding their gongs. Gemma thought they must be very wicked indeed to be in a hurry at such a time, and then she forgot them in her anxiety over the stout musician who was blowing his trumpet so loud and so long. His cheeks puffed out and collapsed so beautifully that Gemma trembled; she was afraid he might injure himself before they even got started, and if he did, perhaps the band would refuse to play any more.

Mary Florinda noticed it. "My," she said, "don't he blow hard! I wonder what they pays him to blow like that."

But Paul Jones began to cry; he had dropped his lollypop and it was sticking fast to the floor of the car. Gemma rescued the stick and returned it to her charge just as the gongs sounded and the three special cars moved off. Gemma shut her eyes tight; she always shut them at supreme moments, and it was like being President of the United States or a lady at a circus, to ride behind a brass band.

The little gray-coated boys and the little blue-uniformed girls looked straight in front of them; there was not even a murmur of conversation. The cars moved rapidly down Chapel Street and turned the corner. They passed the statue of Christopher Columbus, the Italian bank and the long rows of brick houses. The tide was out and the odor of oyster shells and dead star-fish mingled with the reek of the sea.

Gemma opened her eyes, for there was



Gemma trembled; she was afraid the trumpeter might injure himself and the band would refuse to play any more.

a shrill wail and Paul Jones, aged two and fat, fell off the seat in a fruitless effort to reach the remains of the lollypop on the floor. Gemma bent down and grasped him firmly by the belt and pulled upward; she was frightened; if Sister Mary Beatrice noticed it, she would know that Gemma had really forgotten her charge. Paul Jones resisted. He kicked and wriggled and finally set his small white teeth in the hem of Gemma's blue skirt. Mary Florinda gave him a

jerk on the other side; there was a struggle and, still shrieking, he came, right side up, to the seat. But there was a slit in Gemma's skirt; Mary Florinda saw it.

"Aint he fierce?" she said, in a whisper. "He chewed Elizabeth Apple's hat the other day. If I was Sister Mary Beatrice I'd muzzle him good."

Gemma sighed. "Mebbe he can't helpa id," she said softly; "he waz awful long gettin' his teeth, and bambini always bite things when they's growing teeth. Signor Paolo Jones," she added, addressing the militant infant, "eef you will pleze nod bita me, you will have some hoky-poky."

Paul Jones stopped abruptly in the middle of a yell. He dropped his chubby fists to his knees and slowly closed his mouth; two large tears trickled down his red cheeks and fell on his collar. He stared hard at Gemma. She timidly offered the lollypop stick again. He took it, inserted it slowly between his lips and waited. For the moment hostilities were suspended, but it was plain that the youthful biter only awaited results. If Gemma failed to make good he would know the reason why.

Meanwhile, the cars sped on from Morris Cove to Lighthouse Point. A keen wind blew from the Sound; a big white steamer lay idly in the offing; some oyster sharpies scudded along the shore. Then came the big trees at the loop. The musicians were climbing out of the front car; the others were already moving up to the platform.

Gemma gathered Paul Jones carefully into her arms and clambered out after the rest; then she set him carefully down on the grass and shook out his little blue plaid pinafore. He wore a big white straw hat with two aggressive little ribbon ends behind, like a handle, and Gemma pushed the elastic further under his chin and took his hand in hers.

Meanwhile, the other children had all scrambled out. They were kept in order by the Sisters. When the band started for the beach the little procession wavered a moment, then broke, and there was a wild flight for the sands. Gemma did not go. She could not, for Paul Jones had sat down. He had lost his lollypop stick

and he refused to budge. He howled. Gemma tried to lift him, but she could not; he was peculiarly limp; there did not seem to be a bone in his body. Gemma struggled and Sister Mary Beatrice solved the problem.

"Mary Florinda," she said calmly, "help Gemma bring Paul Jones—I must go ahead with the children."

Mary Florinda gasped. She even thought of rebellion, but meeting the Sister's eye she obeyed.

"Yes, m'm," she said.

The others moved on; there were glad shouts from the beach, the strains of delicious music, the whistle of the peanut-roaster.

Mary Florinda came back slowly. She found Gemma still trying to pry Paul Jones out of the soft turf. He was almost purple in the face and his fists were clenched, but he did not budge. The special cars were moving around the loop to make room for the regular line to come in. It was sweet and still under the tall trees, but one could almost hear those luncheon baskets on the long white beach.

"Aint you evaire comin'?" said Gemma, addressing Paul Jones. "I can't find no lollypop sticks an' I aint gotta lollypops up my sleeve."

Paul Jones merely sobbed.

"My, aint he mean?" observed Mary Florinda. "You push him real good, Gemma, and I'll pull his feet."

Gemma pushed, her thin little shoulders rounded to the task. Mary Florinda grasped Paul's stout ankles and gave a vicious jerk. The result was an ear-splitting scream from the offender, but he was only dragged a few yards.

Gemma rose slowly to her full height and looked at him in despair. "He aint gotta bones," she said solemnly; "he's all soft and he stretches all ad once."

"Wants lollypoths!" wailed Paul Jones. "wants lollypoths tick!"

Mary Florinda seized him by the shoulder. "Come 'long," she said angrily; "I smell peanuts!"

The two year old rebel turned promptly and shut his teeth on her finger. Mary Florinda let go with a shriek.



- E. FORY KILVERT -

Paul Jones had lost his lollypop stick and he refused to budge.

"My, aint he fierce?" she cried, dancing on one foot. "Don't you touch him, Gemma; he's biting!"

Gemma sat down in the grass and began to cry. "I aint goin' to have no picnica," she sobbed; "it aint fair no ways ad all!"

Mary Florinda backed against a tree. She shared Gemma's feelings, but she was more resourceful. Her desperate glance fell on a group by the lately arrived trolley-car. Three women were helping an old lady into a rolling-chair. Not far away was a go-cart and in the go-cart, a charming, curly-headed girl baby. Mary Florinda walked across the

track and cooed at her. She responded; she laughed and held out her arms. The conspirator looked at the women; they did not see her—the old lady was ill; one of them kneeled by a basket, measuring some medicine into a cup. Mary Florinda wheeled the go-cart carefully over the track. Gemma looked up through her tears and the baby cooed at her.

"Oh, aint she a peach? Oh, Mary Florinda. look ad her eyes—aint they pretty? Oh, *cara carissima mia*, I wish you waz Paolo Jones."

Mary Florinda said nothing. She was breathing hard. She undid the strap of

the go-cart and lifted the beauty out. Cooing, the little girl toddled to Gemma. Meanwhile, Paul Jones suddenly rose, fell over, caught himself on his hands and plunged at the empty go-cart. Mary Florinda lifted him in and fastened the strap firmly. Then she looked at Gemma. The little Italian returned her gaze, clasping the cooing, dimpled, cheery little girl. They looked at each other one long moment.

"Let's?" said Mary Florinda.

Gemma drew her breath. "S'pose they see us," she gasped.

Mary Florinda looked over her shoulder at the woman and the lunch basket.

"No; she aint lookin', an' if she does she'll see a baby sittin' up there some perky and mebbe—mebbe, Gemma, she'll be real pleased to get a boy 'stead of a girl."

Paul Jones, strapped in the go-cart, put his finger in his mouth.

Gemma took the little girl in her arms. She fairly staggered under her weight, but she ran. "Quick, Mary Florinda," she said, "when he takes out his finger he yella—he yella fierce!"

Paul Jones began slowly to withdraw his fat forefinger and, panic stricken, Mary Florinda fled after Gemma and her prize. The band was still playing on the beach and the children were all there, but there was a disturbance. Sister Mary Beatrice shaded her eyes with her hand and looked skyward; a black cloud was sweeping up from the southwest. There was a heavy roll of thunder, then another. Sister Theresa fluttered up; the wings of her white bonnet stood out stiffly in the rising breeze.

"Father O'Hanna-gan thinks we'd better start back," she panted; "it's too bad

but, if it rains hard, the children will all be drenched."

Sister Mary Beatrice sighed. Her sympathetic eye took in the different groups of joy-makers. Some were trying to dig clams; some were wading; more were still eating, faces and fingers sticky with pink icing.

"I thought we might stay a while



"Wants lollypots!" wailed Paul Jones.

longer," she began, "at least until—"

A sudden clap of thunder broke the sentence in two. One or two of the timid children began to cry and all the waders ran out of the water.

"We'll go," said Sister Mary Beatrice; "you hurry your children up, Theresa."

Gemma and Mary Florinda had only just divided huge slices of cake with their prize. The pretty blue-eyed baby nibbled it and laughed.

"Aint I glad we shipped Paul Jones," said Mary Florinda, with her mouth full. "I wonder if he's biting 'em."

Gemma helped the baby to more pink icing. "Always I loves bambini," she said solemnly, "but Signor Paolo Jones—*ma ché!* he ees a shrimp."

They were interrupted. "Children," called Sister Theresa sharply, "it's raining; come at once to the cars; we're going home."

Gemma put an arm around the new baby. "*Cara carissima,*" she said tenderly, "me and Mary Florinda are goin' to take you home. Here ees my nize pink cake."

Nothing loath, the smiling baby toddled after them, helped along by both. It was raining fast now, and there was a scramble for the three special cars. The curtains had been pulled down on the windward side; the motormen were at their posts and the band was beginning to play. A crowd of merry, dirty children followed; the seats were soon filled; the priest and the Sisters climbed in and the cars started.

Mary Florinda and Gemma sat together in the front car, and between them, happily nibbling candy, was the

stolen baby. Innocent of guile, Sister Mary Beatrice looked out at the wind-swept landscape. She felt relief that her little charges were all safe and that the stout curtains would keep off the rain. Then she saw a woman chasing the car, waving her umbrella and screaming for them to stop. The good Sister looked across at Sister Theresa.

"Can anything be the matter?" she exclaimed, pointing at the wild figure on the railroad ties, still pursuing, but stolidly ignored by the conductors of these "specials."

Sister Theresa looked back; she was very tired and her feet hurt. "She's merely made a mistake; she thinks this is a regular car and ought to stop for her."

"Poor thing, she'll get very wet," sympathized Sister Mary Beatrice. "I wish we had room, but we haven't."

"Oh, the other car has just passed us," replied Sister Theresa; "some people never notice signs—or anything else."

"That's very true," agreed Sister Mary Beatrice, "but she seems

quite frantic; she's still running."

So she was, for she had found Paul Jones in her baby's go-cart.

The special cars sped merrily upon their way.

"In spite of the storm," remarked Sister Mary Beatrice, "I call it a success."

"Yes," assented Sister Theresa, "and nothing happened to any of the children."

In the forward car, Gemma had just



— B. B. KILBERT —

Mary Florinda lifted him in.

given her last piece of cake to the new acquisition. "Mary Florinda," she said softly, "I guess Sister Mary Beatrice will be realla glad to get such a nize new bambina 'stead of Paolo Jones."

"I guess those folks that've got him thinks he's some boy. My, aint he yellin' by this time!"

"Mebbe it waz awful wicked in us to do it," wavered Gemma, her courage oozing as she saw the Orphans' Home looming up in the distance.

"Don't care if 'twas," said Mary Florinda; "he bit me."

But Gemma's heart sank; she suddenly remembered her resolutions of the morning, her determination to be good all the way through. Paul Jones began to weigh on her conscience; figuratively speaking he had become a millstone. The children all reached the home door safely, although the rain was coming down in sheets and the lightning was vivid. In the hall Sister Mary Beatrice and Sister Theresa counted their charges as they filed past. At the very end of the procession came Mary Florinda and Gemma, leading a charming, dimpling little girl baby. Sister Mary Beatrice looked at her, gasped and looked again.

"Gemma," she said, in a strange voice, "who—who's that?"

There was a scraping of many little feet as the children halted in the hall and on the staircase, looking back. Mary Florinda, still holding the child's hand, said nothing; she only shut her mouth hard. Gemma courtiesied.

"Pleze m'm, we

exchanged heem at the picnica."

Sister Mary Beatrice stood rigid. She was very pale.

"You—*what!*"

"Pleze m'm, Paolo Jones wouldn't walk; he wouldn't do notheeng ad all, and me and Mary Florinda just changed heem for she. Deed, she's awful nize; you'll lika her more'n you did heem."

Sister Mary Beatrice was speechless. Sister Theresa came to the rescue. "Where's Paul Jones?" she demanded sternly.

"We put heem in the go-cart same as waz the bambina, an' we left heem for her mamina."

Sister Mary Beatrice looked at Sister Theresa. "Oh," she said, "isn't this terrible?"

Sister Theresa remembered. "That was the woman who screamed after the car; she thinks we stole her baby!"

Sister Mary Beatrice reddened with shame; then she summoned her strength. "Sister Theresa," she said, "take the baby until we can find the mother; I'll

take these two wicked little girls upstairs. Mary Florinda and Gemma, come with me," she added, and turning solemnly, walked slowly across the hall and up the stairs. Behind her, two small, meek figures followed. The other children huddled together and stared; some began to cry. Gemma clutched at Mary Florinda's skirt; their knees shook under them. There was something awful in this silent, strong condemnation.

At the door of



She felt herself to be almost beyond the pale of forgiveness.

—B. CORV KIEWERT—

the dormitory Sister Mary Beatrice stopped and turned.

"You will not be allowed to go to prayers," she said sternly, "and you will have no supper. Go in there and meditate. You've stolen a baby; that is not only a sin; it's a crime for which people are imprisoned. And you have, perhaps, lost little Paul Jones—and you've brought discredit on the Home. It hurts me, it hurts me as much as if I'd done it myself. Go in there and repent!" She pointed to a long closet off the dormitory where small sinners among the orphans were sometimes left to meditate on their offenses.

Gemma and Mary Florinda crept past her, trembling. They heard her close the door. Gemma threw herself, weeping, into her companion's arms. "Oh!" she sobbed, "I'm—I'm awfully sorry—aint you, Mary Florinda?"

"No," said Mary Florinda, "I aint; he bit me."

But later she wavered. They heard the chapel bell ring and then the fragrance of supper ascended. It stopped raining and the clouds cleared away; a lovely sunset flooded the yard. They heard the voices of the children out of doors. Mary Florinda choked. Then she sniffed.

"We didn't have any picnic," she sobbed, "and we didn't have any supper, just because of him—I—I wish bears would eat him!"

"Oh, don't!" wailed Gemma. "We'se

awful wicked, I guess; mebbe, we wont evaire go to heaven ad all."

"I wish I'd eat more cake," said Mary Florinda, and burst into tears.

Time passed; the sun set and the lovely summer twilight fell. It seemed a long, long while in the closet of repentance. Gemma and Mary Florinda sat together in the corner and sniffed. Emotion was quite exhausted, but they felt themselves to be almost beyond the pale of forgiveness. They began to dread the coming of darkness; perhaps they would have to stay there all night. This thought was so terrifying that Gemma drew a long breath of anguish; she remembered that there were mice in that closet. Then they heard some one coming across the dormitory and the soft rustle of a skirt; after a moment the door opened. Sister Mary Beatrice looked in. On the floor of the closet of punishment were two wretched little girls huddled together and in tears.

"Come; you may have some supper; we've found the baby's mother," she said, in a pleased voice, "and—and—though you were so wicked—you did good after all, for the lady's sister has adopted Paul Jones; he's got a lovely home."

Gemma and Mary Florinda looked at each other, their tears suddenly dried. For a moment they were speechless; then Gemma gasped.

"*Ma chè!*" she exclaimed, "aint id fierce?"



A Male Flapper

By W. CAREY WONDERLY

Author of "The Tin Pan Girlie," etc.

Illustrated by Robert A. Graef

WHEN Emma Kelly got off the car at their transfer corner, and William Gordon was not waiting for her in front of the plate glass windows of The Hub, as was his wont, she seemed to realize at once that something quite out of the ordinary had happened.

And it had.

A little later, Gordon, from his third floor front, saw Emma cross the Square; and he was at the door, watching for her, when she paused for breath, at his landing, before resuming her climb up another flight of stairs.

"Hello, Billy," said she. "So we missed each other to-night—leave the office early?"

"Yes, an hour or so, but—Kelly, I'm to be in the Tennis Club's play this year!"

"The Tennis! Billy!"

"Yes, Stuart Courtenay asked me himself."

Emma was silent, leaning against the wall, and intently regarding the faded carpet at their feet. Suddenly she looked ^{long} smiled, and it was only then that ^{just} she would call her pretty.

"You'll be frightfully smart now—in the Tennis set," she said frankly, holding out her hand. Gordon took the slim fingers and pressed them warmly. "I'm very glad, Billy," she added, with a note of seriousness in her voice. "That's where you belong, you know. You were

never cut out for—for this lunch here."

"Oh, they're good enough—"

"Not your kind," she insisted gently. He did not contradict her.

"I'm off to a smoker at the Courtenays' to-night," he explained, a trifle self-consciously. "They're going to read the play and distribute the parts. Of course, I'll be assigned to the chorus, but—"

"But it's a Tennis Club performance!" Emma declared.

"That's what it is. Kelly, this is a big opportunity. When Stuart Courtenay asked me—! Between ourselves, Kelly, these people in the Square were beginning to get on my nerves. Not that I'm saying a word against 'em—you—they have been perfectly fine to me; but—I'm mighty thankful to Courtenay all the same."

"I'm glad," she repeated.

He beat the palm of one hand softly with the fist of the other, and whistled a street tune under his breath.

"Because I'm due at the smoker at eight, I didn't stop to wait for you, you know," he said.

She nodded.

"Do you need anything? Clean handkerchiefs, or a fresh tie?" she asked.

"Can you launder me a tie in a hurry?"

"Half an hour."

"Wont you miss your dinner?"

"I'm not a bit hungry."

"Good enough!" he said, and disappeared in his room.

When he returned, he had brought Emma not only the tie but two handkerchiefs, and he glanced at his watch significantly when she took them in her hand.

"It won't take me long," she cried, as she moved away up the last flight of steps.

"I'll speak to Mrs. Waddles about putting aside your dinner," he called after her.

Hardly had he gone back to his room and got out his safety razor and shaving cream, when Emma returned, rapping softly on his door.

"Not—already?" he gasped, peering out in the corridor.

"No. . . . Billy, if it's a smoker, you'll not want to wear this." And she held up the white cravat. "Your dinner coat—"

"Yes, I know," he cut in then, with an odd, almost ashamed smile. "But most of the men are going afterwards to a dance at the San Carlos, and if I'm in evening togs—eh, why not? I heard Courtenay say once that you couldn't get a corporal's guard of men to a ball nowadays unless the hostess permitted those syncopated dances; well, Mrs. Asher—this is her affair—wont. And so somebody might suggest my going along—simply another man to dance with!"

Emma Kelly looked at him for a full minute before she made answer.

"Why, of course!" she cried. "A dance at the San Carlos! Billy, I'll have to call you 'Mr. Gordon' in the future if this thing keeps up!"

"Of course, if I go it will be merely because they have to have men for the girls to dance with," he shrugged. "All the same, I'd be willing to—stand on my head to get a footing."

And he shook his head, smiled, and went back to his dressing while Emma flew upstairs to the wash basin and electric iron.

"Billy, if it's a smoker you'll not want to wear this."



An hour later, William Gordon left the boarding house and cut diagonally across the Square toward upper Charles Street. There was a fountain playing in the Square, and a handful of people were entering and leaving the church at the corner; from the Conservatory, opposite, came the notes of a pipe organ. Emma Kelly, watching him from the window of her room, up under the roof, said to herself that there wouldn't be another at the Courtenay smoker with either appearance or the manner of Billy. On her heart she guessed shrewdly that this was their sole reason for inviting him to take part in the Tennis Club's annual play. But whether Gordon could retain his footing in this charmed circle, after the performance, she greatly doubted.

And yet she knew that this was exactly what he hoped to do.

"Where's his lordship off to?" asked the willowy blonde, when Emma appeared in the parlor, after her solitary dinner.

"Mr. Gordon is going to be in the Tennis Club's show this year," said Emma. "They're rehearsing at Stuart Courtenay's to-night, I believe."

"Lord love us!" retorted the sprightly brunette.

"Doing a little flapping himself, eh?" mused the blonde. "Well, he looks the part; I must say that for Billy. I've been out with men already, men whose very names are a sort o' *open sesame* to the smartest houses in this old town, and believe me, when it comes to the real thing, the blown-in-the-bottle kind, our Bill's got the best of 'em beat to a fade-away. That youngster ought to marry a sweet young thing with money."

"He could all right—if he tried," nodded the brunette. "Pass him the tip, Kelly. Tell him to flap around a little and look 'em over first, not to go too cheap. He can get what he wants. There's not much choice in this burg when it comes to men, and there's many a gilded belle who'd jump at a chap like Billy Gordon."

Emma said nothing and the blonde stenographer looked at her sharply.

"Not—peevish?" she asked.

"I? No, indeed!"

"Every word Kenton said is the truth, you know."

"And it would be worse than suicide for any of us to think seriously of Billy—with his eighteen per!" added the brunette, with a certain significance. "Why, I—all of us—make that much!"

Then Emma broke into a little laugh. She knew they were watching her, for a sign, for a gesture, and she had lived long enough in the Square to appreciate just how far their tales would carry.

"I guess nobody knows better than I what eighteen dollars will do, even when there's only one to spend it," said she, throwing up her hands. "I like Gordon a whole lot, and it's fun to come home with him of an evening from the office and have all the other women in the car

risking an eye at the pretty boy, but—as Rene says, I make as much money as he does!"

Miss Kenton yawned and patted her flower-like mouth. Miss Faris went to the mirror between the windows and carefully set her hat rakishly over one ear. No longer were they interested in Emma Kelly—whom they secretly dubbed a nobody. They had learned what they wished to. She was not in love with Gordon. Neither of them had given her credit for having so much sense!

"Going out?" asked Miss Kenton.

"Just a stroll—far as the San Carlos and back," nodded Miss Faris.

The sprightly brunette smiled openly.

"Yes, I think you'll stroll back all right," said she. "The Tennis Club is rehearsing to-night."

"Why, I knew that, my dear, the moment I saw you anchored in the parlor for the evening," retorted the other.

At nine o'clock Emma went upstairs to her own room and locked the door. There was a small walnut desk, with an electric lamp swung above it, in one corner of the room, and Emma sat down and got out some sheets of note paper and a pencil.

Until midnight she wrote steadily. Often she filled several pages before she got an article to her satisfaction, and when at last she had finished her work, she had a dozen sheets ready for the typewriter. These she would copy on the machine at the office, during her hour for lunch. Then they were ripe for the magazines.

Emma had been doing this work for six months with some small success. Recipes for fudge and rarebit, how to launder lingerie and re-trim hats, anecdotes of children, home-made Christmas gifts—all these Emma Kelly wrote for the women's journals. It brought her in a tiny income and inspired her to wonderful day dreams, so that once she began a poem to April—a notoriously fickle jade! The poem was still in her walnut desk.

After she had turned off the light, Emma crept to the window and looked across the Square. The night was very still; there was a moon, and the monu-

ment to Washington was bathed in silver. As she stood there, she heard City Hall strike midnight, and before she got in bed she went to the door and listened, but Gordon had not returned.

"He's gone to the Asher dance," said Emma to herself. "I wonder if it is as easy as Rene Kenton says?"

Just at first Billy Gordon thought it was. Courtenay himself had taken him on to the Asher dance—and had left him there, hurrying away to more congenial surroundings the moment he had shown himself to his hostess. And Gordon had danced with half the *débutantes* whose names were almost by-words in their native town.

Billy had found them to be charming girls, and once out of sight of their chaperons, quite jolly and normal girls, without airs and wholly susceptible to waltzes and ices and fruit punch. He went to supper with Louise Asher, one of the prettiest of the younger set, a sort of blonde Marie Doro, with family and millions behind her.

But if Gordon thought he had "arrived" on the strength of the Asher dance and his success thereat, he shortly found he was mistaken. He went to dances everywhere; everybody asked him! But there his social engagements ended. Not a dinner, theatre party, week-end or Sunday evening at the Tennis Club came his way. The hostesses invited him to their balls because the other men refused to dance tamely—waltz, two-step, lancers—and they had to furnish some males for their daughters to dance with. And Gordon had become known as a dancing man.

One night, in the foyer of the Academy, where Billy and Emma had gone, Dutch treat, to see Mrs. Fiske, he came upon Mrs. Asher and Louise and a party of young folk. Mrs. Asher nodded quickly, briefly, and hurried on. Her daughter, at that moment, turned to speak to her escort; a few of the men hailed him; all of the girls stared. Emma was wearing a little blue coat suit and a hat, and he was dressed just as he had come from the office. But after that, he never went to the theatre that he didn't wear his evening clothes.

"I think," he said, as he and Emma walked to their seats in the balcony, "that the Ashers are something of snobs. As for Lula—"

"It was I," cried Emma quickly. "If you had been alone—"

He didn't contradict her, although she paused.

"Lula Asher looked nice, didn't she?" he said slowly. "I think she's the best dressed girl in town. And not a bad sort, really. It's her mother who talks, thinks and dreams 'family.' I like Louise a whole lot myself. We've led half the cotillions this season—and she's crazy about the tango!"

Emma looked steadily ahead of her.

"Billy," said she, "you ought to marry such a girl."

"Do you really think so?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes. Why not?"

He seemed to hesitate; then:

"That has been my idea from the first, Kelly. I—I rather fancy Louise too, if her mother can be made to listen to reason. She's pretty—and there's money. You see, Kelly, it's up to me to do what I can for myself. I'm not clever. If I live to be a hundred I'll never be making more than eighteen dollars—in an office. And I hate it! If I had been born a girl, I'd have gone on the stage—and tried for a millionaire. As it is, if I can marry into the Asher set—"

"There's no reason why you shouldn't," cut in Emma.

"H'm. People like the Ashers, with money, only care for family. But look around at the men with family behind 'em in this town, will you?" He spoke with a nervous catch in his voice, and his hand clasped her arm. "Most of the eligible men are—degenerates. Girls like Louise, with money and family of their own, wouldn't marry them for anything on earth. And the fellows themselves are in no hurry to settle down either. They prefer to trot around with the 'tin-panners'—like Irene Kenton, or Belle Faris. And not until forty or fifty are they ready to quit and be good. It seems to me I ought to make good in this."

"You ought indeed!" she echoed, with surprising warmth.



Mrs. Asher nodded quickly, briefly, and hurried on. Her daughter, at the moment, turned to speak to her escort.

"I'm glad to hear you say that. I was afraid you'd—laugh," he told her. "Only yesterday I heard Rene Kenton call me Billy Flapper—"

"As if she counted!"

"I suppose she's right," he added, with an ashamed look on his handsome face. "I'm a male flapper, all right. I'm trying to climb out of my own class, hanging on

to their skirts, receiving small favors with thanks, and praying I shall be fortunate enough to marry a million or two. Well, let 'em say what they like. If I do get there—! She sure did snub me to-night, though!"

"It was I!" insisted Emma.

Five minutes before the final curtain, Gordon suggested that they go. Emma

rose at once and neither by sign or word did she let him know she appreciated his move. And, indeed, she was as anxious as he was to avoid the Asher party in leaving the theatre. She couldn't bury her pride as readily as the man—except for a man.

After that night they never went to the theatre again together. And Gordon experienced a religious change of heart; he began to attend the cathedral where the Ashers worshiped. Then the opera season opened and Billy was in demand once more. For the box-holders found it even more difficult to get men to sit through Wagner than it had been to coax them to dance decorous dances.

Billy Gordon never stopped to ask himself whether he really enjoyed "Lo-hengrin" and Gadske. He did like Puccini and Garden, but the hostesses learned, after a time, that it was not impossible to get men on the nights that Mary sang, and so, on and off during the season, he found himself neglected through this embarrassment of riches which became theirs on such occasions. However, there was usually a corner for him in the Asher box where he stood or sat, an attractive background for the women's gay toilettes.

About this time, too, he began to get his reward. Once he was asked to a Sunday musicale; again, one of the men in the Tennis Club's play brought him home with him to dinner; he walked home with Louise from church one morning, and Stuart Courtenay called him "Billy" instead of "Gordon."

This was the time, too, that Emma, having finished her work and locked it in her walnut desk, would sit in her darkened room at the window and watch for him to come across the Square, in the moonlight, long after twelve. He didn't dissipate, for he was too careful of his health and appearance ever to indulge in anything which might impair them, but he was up and out of bed at all hours, and Emma began to be haunted with the fear that his work must suffer and that he would lose his place. And Gordon wasn't clever, wasn't indispensable to any firm.

"Billy," she said once, "how in the

world do you find time from your social correspondence to look after the books for the Moffat-Wilkens Company?"

"Kelly, that's a slam!" he said, and grinned sheepishly.

"You know you've got to have bread and butter to eat while waiting for your cake."

"Sure! That's so. The books are up to date though—almost. I'll have to find time to post 'em—to-morrow, most likely. You know I'm leaving early to-night—another rehearsal."

Emma glanced cautiously around. They were alone in the smaller office, the typist and the boy in the other room.

"See here, I'll work on them during my lunch hour to-day," she said, in a whisper. "I think I'd not leave them in that condition, Billy—you know what Moffat is. Now I'm not blaming you at all. You know me better than that, Billy, but—Moffat—"

He banged to the ledger and walked away.

"You look out for your notes and I'll look out for my books," he told her ungraciously. "I'm much obliged to you for your offer of assistance, but really I don't need it. Everything will be ship-shape by the end of the month."

Emma said nothing. And the first of the month she resigned her position with Moffat-Wilkens. Gordon didn't know about it until he arrived at the office that morning and found another young woman at Emma's machine. His social engagements had kept him pretty busy of late, for it was the week preceding Ash Wednesday, and the Asher set was trying to crowd in a hundred dinners and dances before the Lenten season arrived and put a stop to all gaiety. He arrived late at the office and left early, and it seemed as if he only went home to the Square to dress and sleep.

He called Emma on the telephone when he found she had left the company the night before.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"I have resigned—that is all," she told him.

"But why? Has there been any unpleasantness—?"



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In a stage box were the Ashers. They came in late.

"None in the world! I have given up my duties with Moffat-Wilkens so that I may devote all my time to my writing," she said. "I can't tell you anything more now, over the 'phone. But—you know I have ambitions in another direction. I— I explained to Mr. Moffat. I am going to write."

"Well, if *that's* it—" he said, somewhat mollified.

"It is," she insisted gently.

An hour later he had forgotten completely the whole incident, the conversation, even Emma.

She didn't see Billy that night, nor the

next, nor for many nights. Easter Week was the date set for the 'Tennis Club's show, and it seemed that rehearsals were being called at the most unheard-of hours. Gordon was seldom home.

In the Square, the boarders talked incessantly of the performance; everybody was going. Miss Faris and Miss Kenton spoke sweetly of five-dollar seats in the stalls, while the landlady proudly exhibited her balcony coupon, and the slavey inquired the price of admission to the gallery. Emma, at first, had intended to remain at home; then she remembered the sharp eyes and the sharper tongues of the blonde Belle and the brune Irene, and she went to Mrs. Waddles and begged to be allowed to accompany her.

It came at last, a wonderful night of music and flowers and lights. The papers in the morning would mention it as quite a society event, and because of this, from orchestra pit to roof, the masses had gathered in their best bils and tuckers, each trying to impress his neighbor that he and his party were the only real social favorites present.

In a stage box were the Ashers. They came in late, after the curtain was raised,

and it was not until the intermission that Emma saw them, but she recognized at once the exquisite Dresden figure in white. And after that, Louise Asher divided her attention with the stage.

They got up to go, before the performance was over, and it was then that Mrs. Waddles saw them for the first time.

"Miss Kelly," she whispered hoarsely, catching Emma's arm, "there goes Lula Asher and her maw. Aint she one picture in them beautiful aigrettes! I love aigrettes. I saw in a magazine where they've gotta play in New York

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written about 'em and called, 'Fine Feathers.' Yes, indeed, Maude Adams is starring in it and all the actors are dressed up like chickens. I think Billy Gordon looks like a regular actor himself, don't you? So grand an' all?"

Emma nodded, not trusting her voice. Billy did look grand and all; he was in his element. There was not a man in the play who could compare with him. And Emma thought of Louise Asher—with her youth and beauty and position and money—and she tore her handkerchief into shreds. She was glad when it was over, when the final curtain fell and she could get out of the theatre, into the air, and home.

They met Miss Faris in the lobby. She was in a low-cut gown, and over it she wore a loose mandarin coat embroidered in wisteria and edged with white fur. Mrs. Waddles deliberately turned and watched her "second floor front" enter a big green limousine with a young man in immaculate evening clothes; Emma knew, but she didn't, that he was Stuart Courtenay.

"She looks like a princess—I will say that for Belle," expostulated Mrs. Waddles, with a final backward glance. "If I didn't know better, I'd say she was one o' them cotillion leaders you read about in the Sunday papers. Lord bless the shops that sell on the excitement plan, say I! H'm, it seems like they're all doing it nowadays, eh?"

"Doing what?" asked Emma.

"Flappin'," returned Mrs. Waddles briefly.

Emma's lips closed in a straight line.

"I'm not," she said.

"No, of course, *you're* not!" And the accompanying look was rich with significance. "But Belle Faris and Rene Kenton! An' nobody can say *that*"—she snapped her fingers defiantly—"about 'em! Then there's Billy Gordon, too—it's something new for a man to play that game."

"Mr. Gordon isn't playing any game," said Emma coldly.

"Eh? What then?"

"Mr. Stuart Courtenay asked him to take part in the Tennis Club's annual show and—"

"I know that," cut in the landlady, with a confidential smile. "But he didn't expect Billy to push himself into the Asher set, all right, all right. The next thing you'll be sayin' Billy Gordon's going to marry one o' them society buds!"

"Well, why not?" asked Emma.

"Miss Kelly! Those kind o' girls sometimes marry chauffeurs or actors; but have you ever heard of one of 'em marryin' a book-keeper? Billy's to them like Rene and Belle are to—the fellah we saw her wi' to-night. They don't take 'em serious—because they don't consider 'em in their class. They dance with 'em and flirt with 'em—and then turn around and marry a man in their own set."

All at once Emma felt tired in body and soul and mind. She was glad she could see the white marble stoop of the boarding house through the trees in the Square. Just then, above all things, she wanted to be left alone.

It was late, long after twelve, but she sat down at the window, her face close to the cool glass. Behind her the room was dark. She was thinking of Billy as she sat there, recalling Mrs. Waddles' words as well as the boy's dreams. If it could be true, if he hadn't a chance in the world with Lula Asher! Billy was so charming—no one could help liking Billy. A woman—any woman should be proud of him; and and yet he was an office clerk—he had come to the city from another state, where his people were nobodies.... She thought and thought until her brain refused to work any longer; her head ached furiously, and she closed her eyes.

She awoke with a start, sat up, and shivered. The room was cold. Almost guiltily she tip-toed to the bureau and reaching for her dollar nickel clock, and brought it back to the window. By the moonlight she read the hour—half after two! Unlocking the door, she stepped out in the corridor. The gas jet at the landing was burning—Gordon was not home yet! It was a signal between them—the gas was always left lighted until he got in.

Emma went back to the window and sat down. Bed was out of the question and yet she was so tired she could scarce-

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ly keep her eyes open. City Hall boomed three, half past, then another hour. Suddenly, out of the night, she saw some one enter the Square.

Pressing her face close to the pane, she watched. It was a man; it was Billy!

Gordon came down the middle of the Square, walking slowly, head forward, arms hanging loosely at his side. He was plainly discernible in the bright moonlight, and Emma's eyes followed him with breathless interest.

From the Monument to the fountain he walked and back again, and then again, over and over, with slow, deliberate steps. Once he sat upon the stone coping of the fountain; Emma fancied he bathed his hand in the cool water. Then he got up, almost directly, and continued his march, to the Monument and back. It got upon her nerves; she wanted to scream; she did beat upon the window with her knuckles but without attracting his attention.

Finally she raised the sash.

"Billy!" she cried.

He stopped, turned, and looked toward the house. She waved her hand.

"Oh, Billy!" she called, choking back a sob.

Then he saw her, heard her, and came across the grass toward the white marble stoop. She pulled down the window and ran to the door, her hands held above her thumping heart.

Gordon came up the long flights of stairs noiselessly. In the corridor, just outside her door, he stopped, leaning against the wall. He was haggard.

"Billy!" she cried, "what is wrong? I've been watching you out there in the Square for—hours!"

"Have you? I'm sorry, Kelly. You see, Louise has said—no."

"Oh—Billy!"

"At least, her mother did. First I spoke to Lula—she told me to go to her mother; and Mrs. Asher—" He made a significant gesture. "I was so sure—somehow, Kelly."

Across Emma's brain there drifted Mrs. Waddles' philosophy, and she wondered if the daughter's sending him to her mother wasn't a ruse. She fairly burned with indignation.

"If I could only do something to help you, boy," she said. "It is terrible. But perhaps Miss Asher will marry you in spite of her parents."

He looked at her strangely, and for a second or two he didn't speak. Then he said:

"Why—Lula would, but—her mother said if she did, she would cut her off without a penny, without pin-money, even. And how could I support her? Good Lord, Kelly!"

Emma uttered a low little sound between a sob and a cry, and then stared at him in silence, as if fascinated.

"It wasn't fair," he complained, with the air of an opposed child. "All along, Mrs. Asher has been so charming to me—I was perfectly sure—And now, I don't know what to do. Kelly. Why, today—I left Moffat-Wilkins—"

"That was unwise," she admonished.

"But I was so positive! And then, Moffat has been making an awful racket about the books. Johnson went to him. He thinks because I am his assistant—But that doesn't mean I am expected to do all the work, not by a jugful! And my posting has always been up at the end of each month heretofore. This Tennis Club affair has kept me pretty busy, you see. It sort of put me back—a little. Well, Johnson went to Moffat, and you know him, Kelly."

She nodded.

"He's had it in for me ever since he heard I had got in the Asher set," said Gordon with a faint chuckle. "You know, with all his money, the Ashers simply wont have his daughter—she's never been to an Assembly!"

"She's a nice girl."

"Oh-h, I'm not saying she isn't. Well, when Moffat got so blamed ugly this morning, I told him to take his job and go hang. After that—after, mind you—he said he had arranged for another man to take my place on the first anyway. D' y' ever hear such a yarn?"

"Never!" said Emma, and breathed more freely. But it was a miracle that Moffat hadn't told him that the firm had offered her his position, and that she had resigned, hoping at least to put off the evil day. "You'll soon get something

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else," she added, "—a clever young man with your address."

He laughed shrilly.

"Oh, I'll get something else—I'll have to get something else!" said he. "Why, Kelly, I owe money right and left—everywhere!"

"What?" She had never dreamed of this.

"I'm in debt up to my ears," he repeated, this time sullenly.

"Why, Billy!"

"Yes, I know; but—there were things I just had to have. Flowers, candy—not to mention clothes and cab hire."

"You owe for all—that?" There was a look of horror on her face. "I can't understand, Billy. The shops let you run up bills with them! What were they thinking of?"

His lips curled unmistakably.

"I rather fancy they were thinking of a certain paragraph in *The Tattler*—do you see *The Tattler*? It's a society weekly. Well, a month or so ago it announced my engagement to Louise Asher. It was denied in the next issue, but—it was easy enough to get credit after that. You see, it might have been true, and no tradesman in this town would care to run the risk of offending a person with the spending of the Asher fortune."

"Billy, you must have been crazy," muttered Emma, wringing her hands. "Now when the shops find out you are not going to—marry—they will be down on you like a pack of wolves. I wish I could help you—I've a few hundred—"

"That wouldn't be a drop in the bucket," he declared contemptuously. "I tell you, Mrs. Asher has treated me pretty rotten, Kelly. All along she has led me to believe—that she approved. And now—I don't know what to do, Kelly—which way to turn. My people, back home—they've got nothing! I wish I had never seen that set of snobs. Lula Asher is like the rest of them—as artificial as a wax doll!"

"Yet she cares for you, Billy—she must!"

"Well, that's not so much to shout over," he said, with a short, dry laugh. "Have you ever seen the bunch of men

in what her mother calls 'our own set'—the men Lula has been thrown with all her life? They're a rotten crew."

"Poor child! They're not the luckiest girls in the world, after all, Billy."

"D' y' know what I'd like to do, Kelly?" he said, after a silence. "Why, go West and start all over again. What do you think of that?"

"Why don't you go home for a few months instead?" she asked gently. "It would do you a world of good—on a farm, out in the open all day long. Why, I'd be crazy about it, Billy!"

"Would you?" He smiled at her eagerness. "I'm in earnest about the West. Would—would you care for it?"

"I?" She laughed. "I'm not particular. You know I have no kin. It's all the same to me."

He hesitated; then:

"Would you go with me? Out West, and start life anew, I mean? If you only guessed how sick and tired I am of this sham—"

"Billy, you're talking nonsense now," she said, as he paused.

"You mean—you won't?"

"I won't, Billy."

"But—but why?"

"Because I am going to New York—that's one reason," she told him gently. "You—you knew I wrote little things about children and household problems, didn't you? Well, I'm going to New York to take charge of such a department for one of the magazines, *The Woman's Friend*. I am very much interested in my work, Billy."

He made a curt gesture of dissent.

"You'd rather write about somebody else's home than have one of your own?" he cried. "You'd rather tell what other women's children are saying and doing, get up menus for other hostesses to serve! I don't believe it, Kelly!"

"You needn't," she said quietly, "for it isn't so. But—the house, the children and the dinners depend on the man who provides them to make them desirable, Billy."

He winced, bit his lips, and then laughed.

"Am I as bad as all that?" he demanded.



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"N-o, no, Billy. But the poor have only love, Billy—not clothes, and auto's, and social position to keep their minds occupied. I—I want—all!"

"I believe I have always cared for you, Kelly," he said slowly, watching her wholesome, expressive face. "I think that this—this other is all a wretched mistake, and that we are intended for each other—predestined and all that. Come West with me—I'll make a man of myself yet."

She swayed toward him, then, with an effort, back and away, and stood flat

against the wall, her hands clutching at the ugly wild-rose paper. And when she spoke her voice was even and gently sympathetic.

"Billy," said she, holding out her hand with a frank, boyish gesture, "I want you to always think of me as a good friend, a real pal, and I'm ready to do anything in my power to help you pull up and start out again, on a clean slate. But you know you don't—love me; you can't—there is Miss Asher. If I were you I'd go home, to your people, for a while at least. And you must settle with

your creditors here in town. Then, West—if you still believe that's the country for you."

"So you don't trust me," he said slowly, passing his hand over his white, tired face. "Well, I don't blame you much, Kelly, and yet—it is true—I love you."

She touched his shoulder lightly, striving bravely to meet his glance with a smile.

"You're just played out, Billy. Try to get some sleep. See—it's daylight—seven o'clock! I'll call Minnie and ask her to bring you some coffee. Poor old lad, it's been a long night—I know!"

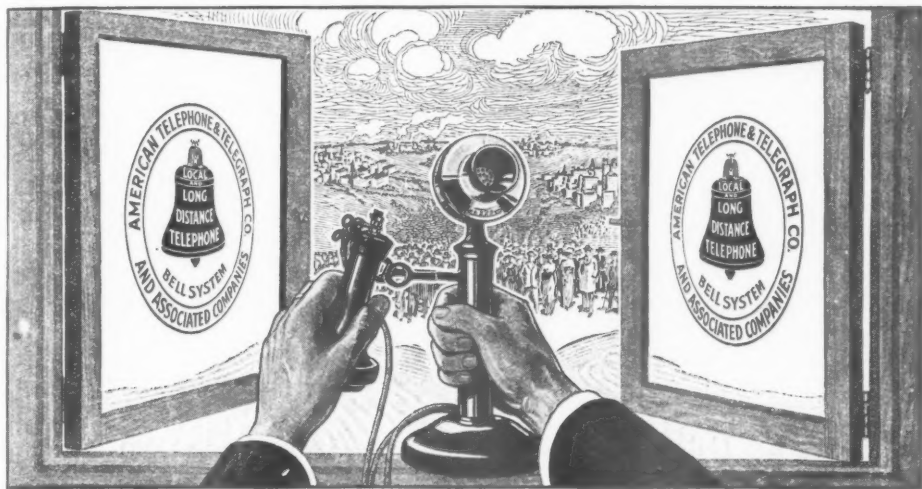
"Kelly," said he, "don't you care—even a little?"

"Of course I do, old pal—you know that."

He turned away.



Once he sat upon the stone coping of the fountain.



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"'Old pal' go hang!" he cried. "It is not friendship I want from you, Kelly. To-night has opened my eyes—I see things—differently now. I've been—a knave, untrue to everything, to everybody—to myself, to her—I was dazzled by the Asher millions— But, Kelly, it's you I love."

"Oh, Billy, if I was only sure!" she breathed then, her fists clenched, her eyes round and bright with tears.

He took a step toward her, arms outstretched, when she raised her hand and checked him. Minnie, the slavey, was coming up the stairs, two at a time, a most unusual feat for her.

"Oh, please, Mr. Gordon," she panted, "it's the 'phone. An' important! I was tol' to fetch you out o' bed"—she giggled—"if you had *re-tired*. I'm glad you aint. Mis' Waddles is that particular— Yes, sir, the party's waiting."

With a muttered apology, Gordon turned and hurried downstairs, Minnie gazing rapturously after him over the baluster.

"I think he's got sumpin' on Chauncey Olcott," declared she.

But Emma didn't even smile. The

slavey clattered away down the corridor, and she waited, like a statue, for Billy to return.

"It was Miss Asher," he said briefly, as he came slowly up the stairway a few minutes later.

"Yes."

"She told me her mother wished to see me—asked me to come up to the house—to lunch. As Minnie would put it, Mrs. Asher has 'come 'round.'"

Emma tried to speak, tried to say "Oh, Billy, I am so glad!" but the words refused to come. She could only stare and wait.

Gordon looked at her keenly for a second. Then he said, a trifle roughly, perhaps:

"Kelly, what's the use of all this pretense? I tell you, we were made for one another. And the other, Miss Asher—I told her I was sorry, but as I was leaving town at once it would be impossible for me to call to see her mother. Kelly, am I going West—alone?"

She shook her head, smiling through her tears.

"No—a thousand times no, Billy," said she.



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The Saving of Baby Dog

By HELEN GREEN VAN CAMPEN

Author of "The Comedy Camel's Fiancée," etc.

Illustrated by H. J. Mowat

OLD Wee Wong tarried at the Professor's gate, looking across the white sand dunes to the ocean. He reflected that straight out there, a long way from California, lay China. Also that the tide was very low to-day; eels would be squirming under the rocks left uncovered; crabs might be snared by the skillful, and abalones were sticking to the seaweed-swathed reefs. He mourned lightly that Monday morning must be a time for collecting the linen of his customers.

Wee Wong was always clean and very neat. He pulled down his blue cotton jacket, felt his coiled queue, drew some "fox-tails" from the yellowing rank grass out of his white socks, and opened the gate. He stepped softly because the Professor was an enemy to noise. The house was always profoundly still. One or two of the seven resident pet cats

were usually in sight, sunning themselves. It was the quietest spot in the little sea-side colony.

Wee Wong lingered to observe the Professor's marigold borders and was startled to find many of the flowers broken and withered. Swiftly his eye sped over the garden. Desolation! Ruin! The careful planting, the wind-shields of early spring, the watering and trimming, all wasted! Geraniums, poppies, dahlias, carnations, even the thorniest bush roses, had suffered. Limp lengths of nasturtium, bits of string clinging to them, trailed over the walks. Wee Wong loved flowers and he sorrowed.

As he stooped for his basket, a Maltese cat dropped from a high window and scrambled up a cypress. From the front door fled more cats, spitting and angry but plainly terrified. The Professor's voice, risen to a bellow, sounded within the house, then a dog's yelp and

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curses—the Professor swearing! Wee Wong grinned, and at the instant the Professor, bearing a cane, dashed upon the veranda in pursuit of a black sheep-dog. The dog was taking the chase as a lively game, barking joyously with the deep note of his breed.

The Professor tripped heavily over a door-mat and was necessarily delayed. Vociferously he addressed the dog, whose plummy tail wagged as he made little quick rushes, then retreated, barking ceaselessly. His desire was to lure the Professor into throwing the cane, for canes were to be retrieved and thrown again. His callish gambolings on legs too long for his body, his immature teeth, his silky coat and frantic enthusiasm proved his extreme youth. He was less than a year of age, although the Professor assumed him to be an elderly, crime-soaked marauder.

"You—you—I'll get *you*, you black brute!" sputtered the Professor. Raising the cane, he struck with it, but only hit one of his rose-bushes. The dog, perceiving at last that this was not a game, drooped his tail and fled whimpering to Wee Wong. Instantly he had rolled on his back, puppy legs waving, tawny, sparkling eyes gazing into the perturbed, buckskin-hued face.

Wee Wong loved dogs more than he loved flowers. He had tended an ailing, asthmatic canine of his own for years, and had never stopped regretting Hang Fat. He supplied bones to all the dog loafers in town. From a passive spectator he became militant. Heart pounding suddenly, nostrils flattening, he stepped astride the dog and glared eloquently. He did not speak, but the Professor knew his meaning.

"You're right; it wouldn't do any good to whip the black beast; he's too strong to feel it. He's a tramp dog. I fed him once and I thought he'd go on about his business, but he hasn't gone. I don't want him; I don't want any dog; I don't like dogs. Look at my flowers; look at my cats!"

Wee Wong unasily stroked the dog, pulling him to and fro by the waving legs. The dog's mouth opened in a great yawn; then, as his neck was scratched, he grunted his content. Wee Wong kept

a nervous glance on his protesting customer. Would he be angry with one who protected the dog? Would he give the washing to the white lady who asserted publicly that the Wong laundry used sour starch?

"He not mind if you whip um lilla bit," suggested Wee Wong. "He be your dog always; he stay always in your house." His intention was to be tactful.

"No he wont!" replied the Professor, heatedly.

"Yes; he always come back to you—" "I tell you he wont; I can't have it!"

The dog jumped up, barked and put his front paws on Wee Wong's narrow chest, licking at his face. The Professor shuddered.

"That's just what he did to me," he exclaimed bitterly.

So, the Professor reflected, dogs always came back—stayed in your house always. But he would make sure that this dog did no such thing. He owed something to his cats and to himself. Grimly he took a five-dollar gold-piece from his pocket and, blinking over his glasses, proffered it to Wee Wong.

"Here, you take this. He's got to be killed. But *I* can't; you take it and shoot him. It's the only way; he can't stay here; he can't be coming back here. You savvy me? I wantum dog killed—dead. Very, *very* dead."

"Fi' dolla killum dog?" Revolted, Wee Wong gazed at him.

"Yes," said the Professor hardily. "He's disabled my Persian—he'd get the rest. You shoot him, *quick*!"

"Nothing disturbs a Chinaman," he thought, noting Wee Wong's wooden face as the latter put the money in a pocket, nodded and moved off with the condemned one frisking before him.

"You see it's the only thing to do," he called to Wee Wong's back. The latter mumbled and went on.

Outside the gate the dog prostrated himself, waving his legs and whining. Wee Wong knelt and rubbed his stomach. Still the dog whined, though he thumped his tail, coyly eyeing the rubber. Wee Wong scratched in the long hair of his ruff. That was it. The dog rolled in gleeful abandon, groaning, languishing.

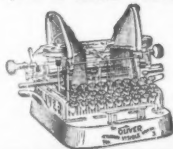


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At the top of the hill he threw the gold-piece into an irrigation ditch and stared down at the Professor's stone chimney.

"Slayer of dogs, you will never sit to feast with your ancestors. May you have no lamp to light the dreams in which devils walk upon your stomach!"

The dog interrupted by flopping over, and Wee Wong had once more to scratch his neck, forgetting to finish the curse. While the scratching lasted the dog made satisfied noises. When it ceased he whimpered, as if sadly put upon. Always his tawny eyes belied his complaint, for it was a merry, artful eye.

"No, no!" announced Wee Wong. The whimpers recommenced. Wee Wong pretended to admire the opposite house. The dog watched shrewdly until con-

vinced that he meant it, then gave a "Whoof!" shook himself and alertly rioted in circles, making dashes at the clothes-basket and baying wildly when Wee Wong shook a stick at him. This was better than timid Professors with cats. Here was one who understood.

"Whoof! Whoof!" he exulted.

"I goin' name you Baby Dog," cried Wee Wong fondly.

The laundry was in a side street, shaded by straight young eucalypti, spiky cypresses and more elderly pines. A hedge of Logan-berries and geraniums enclosed its two lots. Inside the hedge were tall fox-gloves, heliotrope grown into bushes in the mild climate, beds of giant pansies, verbenas, roses, carnations, japonicas, asters. Red flowered passion-vine hid the laundry's roof. A thriving vegetable garden faced the kitchen door; well-kept chickens were clucking contentedly about the garden.

"No eatum chicken," warned Wee Wong. "I buy you nice bo'."



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Baby Dog rolled and whined and Wee Wong, tittering, scratched busily. "No can do all time. I old China boy, get very tire."

Baby Dog reluctantly righted himself and followed Wee Wong inside where Suey Gee was ironing.

"I have brought another partner," shouted Wee Wong.

Suey Gee was amazed.

Baby Dog rolled and waved his legs. Suey Gee, grinning, gently prodded him. Wee Wong explained that only scratching would produce the best results. Then from the cupboard he produced a fine raw knuckle-bone. With a gratified growl Baby Dog seized it and retired behind the range.

Then Wee Wong related his tale, enriching it with dramatic gestures, showing the Professor paying blood-money, himself accepting it temporarily and casting the vile piece into the ditch. Suey Gee eagerly inquired if the exact spot of this renunciation might be again found. The stain might be cleansed if the money were used to purchase meat for the new partner. But Wee Wong declined to remember. It was devil-money.

Suey Gee had been to mission-school in San Francisco for a year and was considered an expert in Occidental customs. He wore American clothes, had cut off his queue, preferred coffee to tea and had long eaten with a knife and fork. Now he was worried. Plainly, if Wee Wong had accepted five dollars and not slain the victim he was liable to arrest.

"But it is now in the ditch," reminded Wee Wong.

"Nevertheless, I believe that lawyers will overcome you. They are clever and more malignant than a thousand devils in the blackest night," said the sagacious Suey Gee. "We must make a plan. If that Professor sees even once the dog who is not dead he will call the man with a star who is always in the saloon and then should we both be put in jail."

Wee Wong shivered. Even a village policeman lacking brass and blue was a fearsome sight.

Suey Gee said the danger might be evaded only with craft. The dog should go out only at night. Faded then was

the brightest of Wee Wong's dreams. He had meant Baby Dog to frolic in the yard, to protect the chickens and the wash when left alone. He protested, but Suey Gee was firm.

"Plainly that Professor is one who will stop at nothing. He may even require from you a swearing paper that says you made this dog dead."

"I—I will not sign that paper," said Wee Wong gravely.

"I fear a time of lies has come upon us," sighed Suey Gee.

"He is more pretty than Hang Fat," said Wee Wong, showing his blackened teeth. It was a high tribute.

Keeping a young dog in the laundry was not easy. Once he jumped through a screen, cutting himself on the wires. Every sound, creak of wheels or voice in the street, caused him to bark noisily. Then one of his guards must smother the bark with the first cloth at hand, sometimes one of the Professors own shirts or a lady's sheer garment from the basket. A customer hearing stifled sounds asked where their dog was, wondering at Suey Gee's calm assurance that there was no dog. Wee Wong would snatch his Chinese violin and play violently, thus confusing possible listeners.

Baby Dog, wanting to be in the open, grew irritable. They made the night-runs longer, foregoing all social affairs, sneaking ghost-like through the streets, fearful fingers holding a towel to Baby Dog's noise to smother the gentlest "Whoof!" The beach was their safest ground, but it was cold on the beach in the wet sea wind. The laundrymen contracted aches that drove them to the shiny brown *samshu* bottle, and *samshu* provokes a feverish condition of mornings.

Querulous complaints began when laundry packages were opened. The flat work was wrinkly, napkins and handkerchiefs folded crookedly; intricate summer frocks were returned with necks ironed awry and a distressing lack of unity to their surfaces. Wee Wong uninterestedly promised to "make mo' smoo," but the care of Baby Dog meant nights of running on legs ancient and

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weary. Baby Dog seemed able to run for hours.

Wee Wong, yawning desperately, would often halt his iron when it should have passed swiftly on, and a smell of burning cloth would ascend.

Then a great thought came to Suey Gee.

"We will dye him yellow!"

He rushed to the drug store. Dye? Yes, all kinds. But what for—cotton, silk, wool?

Suey Gee reflected quickly.

"For wool."

Stripped to cotton trousers Wee Wong and Suey Gee wrought with Baby Dog. Sometimes he snapped and bit. But at five o'clock in the morning Wee Wong reached for his violin and made its two strings squawk the gladness of a whole world for a yellow dog with a white ruff. The dog was rolling under Suey Gee's stained hand. In the early light they knew that he was ably done. The artistic finesse of Suey Gee had tinted him a pale yellow below the white ruff, darkening the yellow until it was brown toward the tail. And the tail was tipped with white. The model had been a collie that passed the laundry daily.

No jail now; no more freezing night runs. Let the *samshu* bottle stand empty. Boldly they let him out, and chided but softly when he ran among the hens. Two pullets clucked their last as sacrifices to his schooling, but he learned; and prowling stranger dogs fled before his vicious growl. Between guard-mounts, he lay in the sun, or tugged significantly at Wee Wong's trouser-leg before rolling over.

Existence was more beautiful daily, until Suey Gee rushed home to report that they were suspected. The druggist and the deputy-sheriff had been chatting on a corner and when Suey Gee and Baby Dog went by they had whispered and laughed. He had heard one say "crazy chinks" and this was followed by sinister laughter.

"He has told the sheriff of the yellow dye."

Wee Wong felt the taste of life grow bitter as he struggled with his fear. Prison is not good. And they must have more dye, for Baby Dog's coat was

wearing black again because he rolled so often. They would send to the city for dye. As they consulted, the Professor walked in.

"I forgot to leave money for last week's wash," said he, blinking.

"It—it—that aw right," faltered Wee Wong shakily.

Suey Gee made change. But a deep bay startled him and Baby Dog came up the steps.

"Heavens! What an ugly brute! Get out!" The Professor shrank against the counter. Baby Dog, his tongue out, rolled and whimpered. Faintness shattered Wee Wong. A man having once possessed an animal so talented and amiable would forever know his property. He would know Baby Dog under any color; then the arrest and jail. The Professor hurried off and Wee Wong clutched Suey Gee.

"He has gone for the man with the star!"

"Ssh!—get the revolver. I will shoot while you run fast, *fast* from the back door with Baby Dog," commanded Suey Gee.

Intrepidly he locked doors and windows for the expected siege, and called reassuringly.

"Go far up the cañon to the honey-bee tree; hide in the lupin bushes along the creek. I will come at dark. Put on your strong shoes. I see no one yet. Take his collar and a rope. The tea is still hot; drink some. No, take *samshu*; you are seventy-one and weak. May all devils pursue that Professor, shrivel his tongue and wither his legs; maybe he couldn't find the policeman."

Suey Gee watched and Wee Wong, close to the rear door, waited, fortifying his quivering nerves with *samshu*.

Twilight deepened into night. Suey Gee, with the revolver in his hip-pocket, cooked supper. Then he said:

"I will go look."

"Tell them they must kill an old man before they get Baby Dog, and the five dollars went into the ditch just below the sign that says 'Lunch at the bath-house, two-bits,'" quavered Wee Wong.

"When I return I shall whistle," said Suey Gee.

The village was dark and quiet as

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Suey Gee swung his lantern bravely through the streets. In the saloon the deputy-sheriff was trying to sell the grocer a fishing boat. Suey Gee listened to their loud bantering voices. They were not ready. They were trying to deceive him with their senseless talk about boats. He passed on to the Chinese restaurant.

In front of this he met a fat Chinese who hailed him genially. Yet Gow was making his second visit to the coast within three months. The first time he had offered to exchange his laundry in a hot interior valley for the establishment of Wee Wong and Suey Gee. The blooming garden and neat house had won him; the sun-lit sea that sent cool breezes through the cypress gave him thoughts of the squaw-fish and flounder caught off the rocks; the fried abalones and baked carpazon head they fed him had determined him.

Wee Wong, at that time, had laughed gently, not wishing to offend a guest. Change his garden, that had been a bare waste when he bought it!

"Here am I once again. Will you trade the laundries now?" Yet Gow said it jokingly, and Suey Gee was about to answer as gaily "No," when his mind saw Wee Wong crouched beside Baby Dog, afraid to light a lamp.

"How soon would you trade?"

"Now," said Yet Gow emphatically. He had just dined on baked carpazon head.

"Wait for me," said Suey Gee, running off.

Back in the laundry, Wee Wong's ancient face wrinkled piteously, his lips open over the black teeth.

"They—they come now?"

Panting, Suey Gee put a protecting arm around him—so little and lean he was!—squatting beside him on the matting. Baby Dog, sensing trouble, had not rolled for hours. He lay tight against Wee Wong, licking his hands, looking up at him with full understanding. Wee Wong crooned and wept over him.

Suey Gee talked rapidly.

"I have heard there are wild-cats and rabbits in that valley, if no fish or abalone, and Baby Dog would hunt. I will

take the long gun and shoot the wild-cat."

"I do not care."

"But I have been told the wild-cat has a pleasant taste, and flowers will grow after a while. We would take the winter bulbs and seeds and slips."

"Flowers are nothing to me if the place is far enough. I only ask if he *has* a laundry there."

"He has the laundry, be sure. He is a company cousin of Kee Moon, second cook at the hotel, and Kee Moon has said with sorrow that it is a dirty laundry, like the nest of a hog. But he has been back to China twice; think of that."

"We will take his dirty laundry at once."

"We shall not go to see; we shall not bargain?"

Wee Wong pointed to the dog.

"How could we bargain?"

Baby Dog growled, showing all his sharp, cruel teeth. Let enemies keep off. As if fearful of frightening the little old man he ceased growling to lick the brown hand. Then, turning his eyes on the door, he resumed his hostile air.

Before the sun had topped the low coast range, and while the sea-fog still hung in the tree-tops, a modest procession hurried toward the station. Suey Gee led, casting apprehensive glances before, behind, to either side. The big revolver was in his shirt, spoiling the fit of his best American suit. On a wheelbarrow he trundled sacks, boxes and baskets, a crate of chickens and trussed bedding. After him came Baby Dog, swathed in a gray blanket. Little but his eyes and his feet could be seen. The disguise was Wee Wong's suggestion. Wee Wong, in the rear, walked oddly—a long step, then a short one. In the right leg of his flapping blue trousers was thrust a loaded rifle. He held it from slipping with his elbow, his hands being laden with bamboo fish-poles, a heavy sack of abalones, Suey Gee's second best American suit and patent leather shoes in a box, and a bone in a paper for Baby Dog to eat on the train.

At one o'clock the same procession formed on the station platform of a

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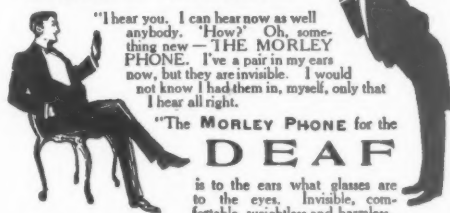
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The sun beat upon them
as they sweated up
a street.



treeless interior town. But Baby Dog, freed from his blanket, jumped ahead, baying excitedly.

The sun beat upon them as they sweated up a street where the white dust lay thick. Languid children hung on gates and giped at them.

"Yet Gow's laundry? Two streets that way, three over, next to the livery stable," a lounge told them.

Through a filthy, unfenced yard, lacking any green except dusty, reddening patches of poison oak, they plodded. Suey Gee produced a key and unlocked

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the rear door, slapping at a swarm of ravenous flies.

More flies inside; the unwashed dishes from Yet Gow's last meal; the blue sky showing through holes in the roof; a plump mouse speeding from a lump of mouldy bread under the table.

Wee Wong, giggling happily, threw his bundles in and helped unload the barrow. Suey Gee found wood and soon the greasy stove smoked from a hot fire. Wee Wong put on the rice kettle and the coffee-pot. Baby Dog gnawed his bone. Suey Gee distastefully wiped a window with his white handkerchief then violently swept the room.

They sat down to eat. Baby Dog gorged his rice hurriedly, then went to snuff at his new quarters. Having smelled each thrilling corner, he barked. "Whoof! Whoof! Whoof!" rushed at Suey Gee, and then, devoting his attention to the ancient Wee Wong, rolled over, legs waving, eyes brilliant.

"Yet Gow got a good laundry," sighed Suey Gee.

"But we have Baby Dog," said Wee Wong happily. "I am very, very strong, and I shall iron so smoothly. In this new province they will never find us or send us to their prison. We fooled them well!"

The Room Upstairs

By THOMAS GRAY FESSENDEN

Author of "Where There's Smoke," etc.

I AM very sure we sounded the horn at the curve. I am sure of this because Billy Conrad had been letting it off at the slightest excuse as well as on occasions when there was no excuse at all. It was one of those siren affairs, starting on a low-register bray and rising in chromatic crescendo to a skittering scream which set the teeth on edge and fairly made each separate hair creep on your scalp.

The shivering scream of that horn tickled Billy Conrad immensely, and before we had gone ten miles up the hilly roads he had appointed himself its official guardian. With it he saluted every cow we passed—every bridge, every curve, every cross road. For all his two hundred and sixty pounds, his forty-

one years and the bald spot on his pate, Billy Conrad has never really grown up. Therefore, he proceeded to let off that awful horn as stated; and when the cows and the bridges and the curves and the cross-roads did not come fast enough to suit him he pressed down his left foot and sent that hysteric wail echoing through the pines and across the hills for the sheer joy of hearing it.

So I am positive that the horn had received Billy's masterful and thorough attentions as we swept about that particular bend in the road at a smart pace.

It was a very sharp bend and the road was narrow. What was my horror, as we rounded it, to see a bent little man shuffling along with a big bundle in his right hand, directly in the middle of the road and almost under our front wheels.

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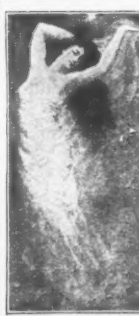
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Billy and I yelled hoarsely in unison. The man in the road jumped quickly to the left. Even before I could grab the emergency brake I heard a low and ominous scraping along our left mud-guard. Then the brake was in my hand and I slammed it hard down. It brought us to a sudden stop—so sudden a stop that Billy Conrad slid ungracefully out of the seat beside me onto his knees and quite involuntarily stuck his nose into the dial of the speedometer. It cracked the glass in the dial, and of course it didn't help Billy's nose materially. But it was no time to think of little matters just then. I was out of the car in a second. Billy followed somewhat more leisurely by reason of the handkerchief he had stopped to hold to his damaged proboscis.

The little man was standing quite erect in the tangle of raspberry bushes at the roadside. It was his bundle we had hit. It lay at the side of the road some twenty feet in front of him. I picked it up and hurried back to him, Billy with the handkerchief to his nose, at my heels.

"You're not hurt?" I roared in relief at the top of my lungs.

Our victim shook his head. He seemed not in the least perturbed.

"No, not a scratch," said he.

"I hope there's nothing breakable in this," Billy bellowed, tapping the bundle in my hands.

We could not imagine, either of us, any human being with a sound pair of ears missing that horn of ours.

The little man took the package. It was a large package, wrapped in coarse brown paper and bearing an express tag. Just now the paper along one side was scraped off by our mud-guard, and there was a gaping hole torn in the stout pasteboard box beneath. It disclosed something glimmering within the box.

The man in the raspberry bushes proceeded to make that opening larger and peered through it anxiously, poking inside the box with an exploring forefinger.

"No damage, I think," he assured us with a smile. "And I'm not the least bit deaf," he added in mild reproof of our lifted voices.

"Good Lord!" Billy exclaimed. "How on earth, if you're not totally deaf, did you ever miss that screecher of ours?"

"I was thinking," said the other simply. "You know when you're thinking you can lose yourself pretty thoroughly sometimes. I was thinking whether or not I'd better get a little piece of tin to set this engine on. Yes, it's a little engine in here," he added, holding up the box so we could see through the enlarged opening in its side. "There's a lathe with it too, and a real pump, and a saw that they say will saw through match sticks. It'll be bully fun working it."

Billy and I both stared at him, this gray little man who talked in such pleased fashion about a boxful of toys. And as we stared, I noticed something a bit queer about his eyes—a certain worn and tired look, a meekness, a gentleness that gave the lie to the hard lines about his mouth and the long jaw, eminently of the fighting variety.

"Oh, yes. I like toys. I've got heaps of 'em and I keep on buying them," he chuckled, noticing our blank expressions and seeming to enjoy them hugely. "I never had any when I was a kid; I'm getting my fill of them now."

I glanced over at Billy Conrad. He winked solemnly. Also he guardedly made a suggestive circular motion about his left ear with one forefinger.

"You were going our way," I said to the little man. "At least let us give you a lift in the car. The seat is wide. There'll be plenty of room for the three of us."

"Thank you. That's good of you," said he. "It *is* hot, and the box is pretty heavy."

He moved over to the car with a queer, shuffling movement, as if his feet were weighted, each with pounds of lead.

We lifted in the box and stowed ourselves as comfortably as possible about it and started down the winding white road again. The box was so fixed that Billy couldn't reach the horn lever with his foot. I was glad of that.

"I board with Mrs. Caswell. If you'll set me down there I'll be awfully obliged

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to you," said our guest. "You know where it is, of course—the big white house at the very summit of Bald Hill. My name is—is—er—Jones."

Billy solemnly shook hands and said he was delighted to meet him.

"I believe," said the little man, turning to me, "that you are on the *Herald*. I think you are the man who was pointed out to me a few days ago; they said you were city editor or something like that."

Billy started in blatantly to sing my praises, but the other interrupted him gently but firmly.

"You think I'm a bit queer, no doubt," said he. "Well, I *am* queer. I wouldn't have admitted it for worlds a year ago. But it's all right now. You see, I'm dead. Oh yes, quite dead. I find it awfully restful, being dead. It relieves you of a whole lot of responsibilities.

"If you're a newspaper man, perhaps I could tell you something that might make one of those Sunday features, and maybe it's no good to you at all. I wouldn't tell you if you weren't a newspaper man. I always found them a nice lot of boys—quite ready to respect your wishes and keep quiet about things you ask them to. Are you a newspaper man?" he asked, turning suddenly to Billy.

"Me?" said Billy Conrad. "Heavens, no! That's Tom's game. I couldn't put ten words together that would mean anything. But I'm the only original little listener, and Put-your-trust-in-me is my middle name."

"I didn't know but what I had to tell might help somebody else," said the little man almost wistfully. "Other people's experiences *do* help a lot, I find."

"They boost us over many a rough bump," said Billy engagingly.

The little man sighed. "I think I'll tell you," he said.

He stopped to shift the box at his feet so the things in it wouldn't jolt quite so much.

"First, let me introduce myself," said he. "My name is—er—Gray."

Once more Billy solemnly shook hands with him and said he was more than pleased to meet Mr. Gray.

I shot a covert glance at Billy when the operation was over. His eyebrows

were lifted high, and again he was making that suggestive motion about his left ear with his forefinger. I scowled and shook my head, and Billy immediately desisted.

Then, as the engine was purring over-loud for comfortable conversation, I slowed down the car. The little man nodded gratefully and began to speak.

"I used to think it was my wife's fault, but I've got over that. She was a thoroughly good woman—Mrs.—er—Mrs. Brown. I suppose she couldn't help being ambitious any more than other people can help being lazy or suffering from disease or things like that. I was born in the country—hilly country, about like this, and my people were poor. I believe I said I'd never had much boyhood. It was work with me, from the time I was able to sit a horse in the fields.

"I went to the city at sixteen, and I made good. Oh, I had it in me—the bone and the sinews of the hills. I made money—heaps of it; that's easy enough. Then I married—a good woman, a fine woman. But ambitious—yes, ambitious.

"There were two children, girls, both of them—pretty girls, but ambitious like their mother. Maybe it was her training. I don't know. It's all right now, anyway. You forgive lots of things when you're dead.

"We had an establishment that took money—and the ambitions of the family took money too, and the things didn't always break right for me—they went always, you know; but there had to be plenty of money, just the same. I always got it. I said it was easy to make money. It is—at the right time. At the wrong time it's a different proposition. But I made it. I always made it—right times or wrong times I always made it. I had to. You see, the girls were growing up.

"Then one summer—I must have been about fifty—something went wrong with me all at once. I noticed it first when I tried to sign some checks, and all I could write, instead of my name, was the word *hell*. I kept trying and trying that morning. But all I could write was just that one word.

"Scared? Of course I was. I don't

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know how many eminent specialists were rushed to me by special trains. The upshot of it was I was packed off to Europe. Mrs.—er—White couldn't go with me. The oldest girl was getting married soon to a Russian duke, or maybe he was German and a baron. I've forgotten. Anyway, Mrs. Black couldn't go with me, and besides, the specialists said it wouldn't be well for her to go. So I went with just a hospital nurse—Kelley Burke his name was. A corking chap. They thought we did the Continent—the baths and cures and all that rot. We didn't. We went to Paris and there I saw the little toy flying machine. It was a dandy little machine. It flew and dipped and its engine whirred real life-like, and it had a real gasoline engine, though it wasn't over a foot long. I had a great time with it. Then I bought the steamboats, and the little racing motors and a whole lot more toys. I forget what they were.

"We didn't go out of Paris. I stayed there at the hotel and played with them. Sometimes at the first it used to frighten me. I used to stand in front of the toy shops and see something I particularly wanted and try to fight off my desire to have it to play with. But after a time I got over that. I bought shamelessly right and left. My rooms at the hotel were filled with them. And I got over being frightened about things. Besides, Kelley Burke said it was all right. He was a dandy chap—Kelley Burke. Now he's dead too."

He paused to brush a hand across his eyes. I saw Billy Conrad leaning close to him, his own face all twisted.

"Perhaps it was because I never had any toys when I was a kid, and because I always wanted them," said the little man apologetically. "Maybe that was it. Anyway, I had a great time in Paris, and Kelley Burke was an awfully good chap. He'd play with me by the hour, though it must have bored him to death.

"Well, anyway, by and by I got so I could write my name all right and began to worry about things back here, and Kelley Burke said he guessed we could come back. So back we came, and I went back to the money-grubbing, and every-

body said how well I looked and how much good Carlsbad and Dieppe and such places had done me. And I went down to the office just as usual and took hold of things and got them straight, but what really kept me going was the room upstairs.

"Nobody knew about it but me. It was a big room, just off my own sleeping-room. I told them I'd got to have a place at home to be quiet and think, that nobody was to go into it, not even the servants—that I'd take care of it myself. Then I had iron shutters put on the windows and a lock on the door that couldn't be picked; and every night I spent there. They thought I was dopping out great schemes."

He paused again to chuckle delightedly to himself.

"I was riding rocking-horses, and fooling with mechanical animals that crept about as lifelike as could be, and adding track to a little toy railroad I had bought.

"That's what kept me up—my nights in that room upstairs. I know it now. I made more money than ever. I had to. Then I had to curtail my nights in the room. Sometimes I couldn't get there at all, or I was too tired to play when I *did* get there; often I went to sleep on the floor with one of the animals I was trying to wind up in my hands. I'd find it there next morning when I woke up. But I kept on at the office and I made money. I had to.

"Of course it all came on again. There was another smash. I was trying to dictate a very important letter one morning to one of the stenographers. I wanted to say: 'Dear Fitch: Regarding those four per cent bonds of the Water Board.' Well, I couldn't say it. Miss—whatever her name was, the stenographer—sat there with frightened eyes, while I kept saying over and over: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people. And hath raised up a mighty salvation for us in the house of His servant, David.' Just like that—I kept saying it every time I tried to dictate that letter to Dan Fitch, until the stenographer got up and backed out of the office, careful to keep her face to

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me, and looking as if she was going to scream any minute.

"So we had the whole thing over again—the specialists and all that. An'l since Toulon and the Rhine, and all those places had done me so much good before, it was plain I'd better go there again. But this time Mrs.—er, Mrs.—never mind; I've told you my wife's name before—couldn't go with me. The youngest girl was getting married to somebody just then. So they sent for Kelley Burke again. He was an awfully nice chap, Kelley Burke. He used to play with me by the hour that time we were in Paris, though it must have bored him to death to do it.

"Well, I was canny this time. After I'd repeated 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel' to Kelley some few score times, I managed to get out what I wanted to say. I made Kelley understand that I didn't want to go abroad, that I wanted to come back to the hills and find a big farm-house with a great big garret, where I could have all kinds of toys to my heart's content and play with 'em rainy days when the rain was beating on the roof. You see, when I was a kid I used to play rainy days in the garret at home—the days when it was too rainy to work, and I used to imagine just the sort of toys I'd like.

"And Kelley Burke was a great one for catching what you wanted. He understood. He was a dandy chap. Why, in Paris he used to play with me by the hour—but I guess I've told you that before.

"Anyway, he fixed it so he could bring me up here and find this place for me with Mrs. Caswell, and leave me some toys and wait till I got over reciting 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel' too frequently. Then he took the steamer abroad, to sign my name to letters from Carlsbad and Toulon and all the rest of those places.

"But Kelley's dead, now, poor chap, and I'm dead, too. You see, Kelley took the *Ultonia* across; you know how she hit the derelict and sunk. Yes, it came to me when I read it, even as I was all broke up about Kelley, that I was dead, too. And that I could just stay on here

forever and ever and play and play and play in Mrs. Caswell's garret. I'd taken 'most ten thousand dollars with me, and ten thousand dollars will go a long way up here and buy lots of toys besides.

"Of course they'll miss me some; but there's mitigating circumstances—some four hundred thousand dollars of insurance fully paid up and collectable. That will help a lot. The worst of it is Kelley. He was an awful fine chap. I haven't forgotten how he played—well, never mind that. I've told you about it before.

"Mrs. Caswell is a fine woman. She's like Kelley Burke; she understands. I used to be sort of ashamed at first—sort of ashamed and afraid she'd find me playing and wouldn't understand. I kept a big sheet in the attic that I could throw over the things if I heard her coming. But one rainy day she caught me. I was playing with some little iron steeple-chasers. Say, they were great. You wound up the horses with a key and put the hurdles just a foot apart and the horses would run along the floor and take the hurdles as neat as you please. You could have races too. If you wound one of the horses tighter than the rest, he went faster and won.

"Well, Mrs. Caswell walked in on me while I was racing the steeple-chasers. I was awfully embarrassed for a minute. But she just enthused and had me wind them up for her, and said they were the cutest things she had ever seen. She cried a little, too, and then she went downstairs and made the dandiest pair of carpet knee-pads, so now my knees don't get so sore when I crawl round on the boards of the attic floor. She's been mighty good to me, Mrs. Caswell has.

"Here we are. This is where I live, this big white house. Say, come and see me sometime. I think you'd be interested in the steeple-chasers and some of the other things. Lots of them are mighty ingenious."

I stopped the car. The little man got out with his box. I tried to say something, but I couldn't.

"Come and see me sometime," he invited again. "Some rainy day, if you can."

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Then, waving a hand to us, he moved up the flagged walk at that queer, lurching shuffle, holding the precious box

tightly under his arm, and passed into the big white house.

"My God!" choked Billy Conrad, blowing his nose violently. I started the car.

Neither of us spoke until we were well down the road. Then Billy made a sound as if he were trying to dislodge a peach pit from his throat.

"Who was he, Tom?" he said shortly.

"He told you—J. A. Smith," I replied.

"The *Ulltonia* and all that. You *must* know," Billy persisted.

"I don't," I said, perhaps over-sharply.

"Good!" said Billy. "You'd better not." He said it as if, had I admitted anything, he might have joyfully murdered me then and there, and thrown my remains into the wayside bushes.

"And you can't blame him," Billy said softly. "Under like circumstances, I'd have said *my* name was Smith."

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A BREEZE, chill from dank cellar and noisome court, met at the street corner a vagrant puff of scorching air. A whirlwind was the result. Crandall saw it coming, and settled his hat and closed his lungs.

"Go it, old girl!" he commended as it took toll from the news-stand before which he had paused. "In a small way, you look like home; you behave like home—but I'm blest if you smell like home!"

It spiraled past, and was lost in the dim iron forest beneath an elevated road. Crandall's choked lungs began to expand again when an incoming express in the subway below sent up a hot, oily breath that sickened him. For a moment, his broad chest remained passive, then, reluctantly, began to recede.

A clock in a tower behind him struck the hour. One o'clock! he thought grate-

fully. At ten, he'd get off this devil's grill into clean air again. In the meantime, dinner at a queer little place he had seen down at the very tip of the grill; then the Battery till train time. He had planned further to "do" New York this afternoon; but he'd better get out of the polluted air and the heat, or she'd "do" him, he thought grimly.

He bought a magazine at the news-stand, and was moving toward the stairs when he heard a cry. He turned quickly, and caught a girl's imploring glance from the rear platform of a car, onto which was swarming a crowd of Italian laborers. She was wedged tightly against the dash by the sweaty mob, unable to move either way. The conductor was well to the front of the car, his hand raised to the bell cord, while the motor-man clanged his gong impatiently.

Possessed by the same blind fury he had once felt on seeing a soft-eyed year-

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ling trampled at the water hole, Crandall closed his jaws, his magazine, and his fists. It was all over in an instant. There were shrieks and baffled curses, the rattle of shovel and pick on the pavement; the bell rang; and Crandall found himself going north on a surface car, instead of south on the subway.

The girl, panting, disheveled, turned toward him, still clinging to the dash. He caught a glimpse of flushed cheeks, of fear-widened blue eyes; then, "My purse!" she cried in dismay, staring at her empty hand.

Crandall looked in time to see a small Italian disappear beyond the gesticulating mob he had flung from the platform. There was not a policeman in sight. He started to leap off, but realized the futility of chase. They were in the lower part of the city, and the place was a rabbit warren of crowded tenements.

"Oh! what shall I do?" The girl's voice was tragic. "My week's wages are in it—all I've got in the world; and I owe two weeks' rent! Oh!—Oh!— And I haven't had any dinner!" The last was so trivial, compared to the real calamity, that she returned Crandall's amused smile.

"Where are you going?" he asked, with his usual directness.

"I was—I always do go to the Park Saturday afternoon to eat my lunch and darn my stockings." She added the last as though wishing to be quite explicit.

"Then to the Park we will go! You may darn your stockings while I rustle something to eat—"

"Oh, no! I couldn't do that!" she interrupted. She had grown calm, almost prim, in her effort for self control. "I'm not a bit hungry; and I shouldn't have told you what I did if I hadn't been so startled."

"You didn't tell me anything," he corrected. "You would have said what you did if you had been alone."

She seemed relieved. "But I'll manage, somehow." She smiled confidently up at him. "I'll get off now, before the conductor comes around. Thank you so much—!" She reached for the bell cord, but he caught the extended hand in mid air.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!"

"But I haven't even car fare!" she objected.

The conductor had reached the door. Crandall held the arrested hand while he fumbled in his pocket for the fare, still held it with pretended caution while they stopped at a crossing, and released it only when they were rumbling northward again.

"There! I'll get you a seat inside, if you wish."

"You can't; it is full to the doors."

"Oh! can't I?" He started in; but she hastily drew him back.

"You mustn't! Maybe, where you came from—but not here." She pretended alarm, but the dimple deepened in her cheek.

"Mustn't what?"

"Mustn't toss our poor people around so."

"But they were—they are crowding you." He indicated a group of swarthy laborers huddled just inside the door.

"That's nothing." The dimple fled before the sudden gravity in her eyes. "We're crowded all the time, here. I sleep crowded; I eat crowded; I work crowded; yes! and I'm beginning to think crowded!"

"Been here long?"

"Two years."

"Lord! Two days have been enough for me! When I first saw you, I was mentally counting up on my fingers how many hours there were between one and ten."

"You're going to start West again at ten?"

His heart stirred at the unconscious wistfulness in her voice; but he said, in simulated disappointment: "West? Now, how did you know I was a Westerner? These clothes,"—he indicated a most correct gray business suit,—“these shoes, this hat—all rounded up on Broadway within the hour; and, still, a Westerner.”

"I knew it by your face," she explained, smiling.

"But I had that attended to on Broadway not a half hour ago. Look again!"

She laughed outright. "Your eyes, then. I know by their expression that you are used to great, wide places, instead of crowded streets."



It Was His Wife's Voice Behind the Hedge

"Very well," she said; "I'll tell you. And what I'm going to tell is the great Masonic secret of the married, which you have no right to know. It is the reason why my husband wished to go alone with Mrs. Barton to-night, and the reason why Mrs. Barton wished to go with him. It is the reason why I ventured here with you. This is the secret:—"

She did tell the secret and you will find it in Julian Street's intimate story of family life, "He Knew She Was Going to Say That," in the

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"Undone! Branded for a maverick the second day out!" he muttered bitterly, under his breath. "And I've copied their dress, their swagger, and their talk for two whole days only to be told by a penniless chit of a girl that I am a Westerner!"

She grew suddenly grave at the reminder of her loss, as he intended that she should. "I'd forgotten! Really, I must get off! There's no reason for going on to the Park now!" She attempted to slip past him as the car stopped.

"Same old reason—"

"But I can't—you mustn't—" She could say no more. Two men stepped onto the platform and settled themselves wearily against the gate; there was no room for them inside.

"You can darn—" Crandall reminded her softly. She looked away, he believed, to hide a smile.

"—while I rustle—" he continued imperturbably when he caught her glance a few minutes later. She did not give him an opportunity to finish the sentence till they alighted at the entrance of the Park; then:

"—for something to eat!" he finished in triumph.

"Hadh't you better get to work?" he reminded, when they were seated beside a populous walk in the Park—a concession to her very natural caution.

"No!" She pursed up her lips and shook her head decidedly. "No! You were very kind to pay my fare, but I can't let you do any more. I'll rest a little while; and then I'll go back."

"Back where?"

"Back down to Twenty-first Street, where I live—stay," she corrected with a wry little smile.

"Walk?"

"Of course. It isn't very far, and I just love to walk." She tried to speak lightly, but the tired quaver in her voice deepened the purpose growing in his eyes.

"And then, what?"

"Then?" She narrowed her blue eyes speculatively. "Then, I'm going to have a perfect orgy of mending."

"What about your dinner?"

"Everything needs fixing—"

"But what about your dinner?"

"—and I'll wash all my handkerchiefs and dry 'em on the mirror, and I'll trim my hat, and *passe-partout* a darling little picture that I've wanted to for ages, and—"

"When you are entirely through telling what you would like to do, I will tell you what you will do," he interrupted calmly. He felt her questioning glance for a long minute, but he would not enlighten her; she must ask for it.

"Wh-what?"

"First,"—he tapped his palm impressively—"first, you are my guest for the rest of the day. We are going up there among the trees where it is cool; and, though I have not mentioned it before, you are going to darn while I rustle for something to eat—a division of labor that very properly goes hand in hand with civilization. The more civilization, the more darning and the more rustling." He caught a flash of amused eyes; but she said, defiantly:

"We will do nothing of the sort! I'll go presently, and then you can get your luncheon. You haven't had your luncheon, have you?" The very inflection on the word sounded hungry. His eyes left a group of children, playing hop-scotch on the walk, and came back to her.

"Beg pardon? Did you speak?" Without waiting for an answer, he continued briskly: "As I was saying, you are my guest for the day. Then, when I take you home to-night, I shall lend you enough to run you till next pay-day. Lend, mind. I shall leave my address, and I shall expect you to pay it back to the last cent." He regarded her with stern, uncompromising eyes, then added, more leniently: "In small amounts, at long intervals. In that way, I shall hear from New York occasionally. She hasn't treated me right; but, never mind." He shrugged resignedly, then picked up a little fat, flowered bag and laid it in her lap. "Now that everything is settled—" He regarded her furtively as he rose.

"Oh, but it isn't!" There was distress in her voice now. "You were awfully kind to suggest it, but—oh! don't you see? I—I can't take money, and dinners, and things from a stranger. You understand, don't you?" She looked hopefully



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up at him where he stood with hands deep in his pockets, his mouth determined, his chin aggressive. He shook his head.

"I don't want you to think I'm silly or prudish; but, you know—it isn't customary—"

"Customary be hanged!" he interrupted promptly; and, sitting down again, stretched his long legs out in front of him, oblivious to the frowns of such pedestrians as had to walk around them.

"But, most of all—" she continued hesitatingly, "—more than anything in the world, now—I—I want you to think

well of me, and—and you wouldn't—" The troubled voice died away.

A sudden fire sprang into Crandall's eyes, half closed because of the glare of the pavement. His long, powerful figure stiffened imperceptibly. She didn't realize the admission she had made, he knew; but after that admission—

He did not look at her, but he could see the delicate face, the blue, wistful eyes, and the shadow on her cheek where the dimple was lurking; he could see her hair, the smooth braids warm hazel, the wind-blown curls around her face almost silver in the glare of the sun. And her mouth! that lonesome, pensive little



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mouth— He turned toward her, and clasped her wrist with his strong brown fingers.

"Look here, Girl!" The whimsical humor was gone from his voice, leaving it deep and stern. "Did it ever occur to you that one might dispense with man-made conventions for a day? With the 'customaries,' as you called them just now; and return to the first principles of life? I am not the one to say that most of the polite fol-de-rol does not have its uses; but there are times when it can be dispensed with—and this is one of them. Look at me."

The command was superfluous. The eyes that were used to "great, wide places" were compelling when narrowed to one small face.

"Just for once, let us rid our minds of all tradition, the legacy of pretense and affectation inherited from a long line of Grundy-fearing forbears, and be our own real selves for a day? We are going back almost to the beginning of things, Girl. Though we have journeyed far, neither of us is very long from that mountain cradle in the East that has peopled the world. I can't speed an arrow, I can't hurl a spear; but, for all that"—he stooped and picked up something from the pavement—"but, for all that, a sharp stone feels good to my hand." He sent it hurtling along a grass plot. His covert glance found her watching it with fascinated eyes.

"My tribe journeyed far to the West," he continued in a voice he purposely made monotonous. "Many and varied are the pursuits that have attracted them; but I care only for the land. I have set my mark on broad acres. I can scarcely ride its outposts in a day. Herds and flocks, of which I do not know the number, graze upon its plains. In the timber land along a mighty river, I have made my home. There have I reared a wide-eaved cottage, and installed therein the treasures I have gathered in my journeyings. Rose and jasmine twine about its doors; vine and fruiting tree shade the white walks that encircle it. It is very lovely; but very, very still." He sighed deeply, paused a moment—and could have shouted his delight when she echoed his sigh.

"It was a long journey here. I wound round mountain passes; I crossed wide rivers and great green prairies; and, always, I would have wished to be at home again, had not the need for a strange implement of iron impelled me ever onward. I found it across the river, yonder, and bartered much gold for it. Now, I am but waiting for the cool of the day when the caravan will bear me westward again. But I am glad now that I came, glad that my longing for the sea brought me over to this wild, uninhabited island, for here I have found you!" He released her wrist and extended his hand. Her eyes were wide and bright.

"Poor little girl! Alone here among the echoing caves, afraid of the wild beasts that infest them, afraid of the savages that skulk among the towering rocks. One of them robbed you—" He paused. Her fingers gripped his hand unconsciously.

"—of the mussels and shell fish it had taken me a week to gather." She took up the story naturally. "And, however I am to pay the Cave Woman for the little niche in the wall where I sleep is more than I know."

"I have a sack of glistening nuggets that I brought from the plains; we'll try one of them on her."

She nodded delightedly. "She'll bow down and worship it," she warned. "I have seen her do it before little nuggets that scarcely glistened at all."

"Maybe she is hoarding them to shy at some poor cave man when he isn't looking." Crandall suggested. "I have known weak women to land big game in that way. And now—" His fingers closed over the hand that still gripped his. He rose cautiously, drawing her up with him. "I dare not leave you here, lest you get scared and run away."

"I would be afraid." She shivered and looked askance at the bushes, near which they were standing. "I saw a bunch of feathers bobbing along above them not two minutes ago."

"Savages!" Crandall declared, breathing again. He had been afraid his ill-timed speech might have immediate effect. "There are lots of good things down there," he continued. "We are go-

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ing down to the caravan for something to eat: venison and bread, and—and fruit—" He paused, a little hazy as to what his caravan should carry.

"And cheese, and wild honey, and little wheaten cakes to eat with goat's milk," she supplemented eagerly. "Oh! let's hurry."

He felt a desire to shout his relief and joy; instead, he solemnly guided her down a buffalo path, and thence out upon a narrow, sunlit plain that scorched their feet unpleasantly. They dodged, they darted, they jostled, they pushed, they shouted their eager questions and answers; strange proceedings for two people alone on an uninhabited island. Every rocky gorge debouching upon their plain held possible peril. They approached them cautiously, peeped fearfully down their peopled length—and saw nothing among the inaccessible heights but sunshine and shadow; heard nothing but the discordant cry of a parrot and the scramble of a small creature that darted into a cave at their approach. She was not afraid of it, she told him proudly. It was only one of the harmless little cattykins, with which the island abounded.

Farther down, they left the plain; and, going in among the towering, scorching rocks, found the caravan.

"O-oh!" She hung ecstatically over the displayed wares of a delicatessen. "O-oh! I've lived on mussels and shell fish so very, very long!"

"They'll cook us something if we go down a little farther." He spoke reluctantly; he did not want to lose a minute of the few hours that remained to him in the formalities of a restaurant.

"It is very hot here among the rocks," she demurred. "And your—your caravansaries"—he caught her furtive glance at the doubtful word—"talk so loud; and the camels draw the flies so; let's go back to the lake?"

Crandall's gratification did not betray itself by so much as a smile. He beckoned a willing "caravansary," who placed before them a cunningly arranged hamper, which they proceeded to fill: hot dishes for their immediate consumption, delectable beverages and cold food for their use later on, fruit, con-

fectionery, everything, and more than two hungry people could consume in the hours between three and ten. The clocks were now striking three.

They found a cool, shaded spot close to the water. The man who carried the basket opened it, spread the cloth and arranged the dishes; after which he returned to his fellows, and they were alone. Alone, these two, primitive, untrammelled by convention, on a silent, sea-girt island; and the world was still young.

Crandall, lounging on the grass, watched the girl with half-closed eyes. Two hours—and he knew every moist tendril that clung to the nape of her pretty neck, every curl that shadowed her white brow, every curve of the wistful little mouth! The small shoes, their heels beveled unpleasantly from long wear, were perfectly familiar to him, as was the cunning darn in her white duck skirt. She raised her arms above her head surreptitiously to pick a blossom for their table, and he looked confidently for the patch on the worn sleeve. Two hours! Soon it would be four—six—eight! Then what? His chin became a little more aggressive. He knew what! He had known from the first.

"Slaves to fashion, every one," she was saying. He didn't know how much she had said before. "The savages have a chance to be easy and comfortable; but they must needs file off their teeth and put skewers in their noses. The Wilderness men are no better; they band their throats with stiff, white bands"—she smiled when Crandall's hands wavered uncertainly toward his collar.—"and wear mantels of wool, buttoned closely around them, on the hottest days."

Crandall sprang up, removed his coat, collar, and tie, and hung them on a limb; he turned in the neck-band of his shirt, and rolled his sleeves above his elbows; then, "Shake!" he said gratefully; and her small, shy hand disappeared within his brown one.

While they ate, they kept a wary eye for savages and wild animals. She trembled when he reminded her that cannibals might be watching them from the thicket; she cowered close to him when



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the wail of a siren was borne to them on the wind. She was sure it was a polly-wogadem or, maybe, a tadpoladactyl, crawling up from the depths of the lake; and they were lost. She threw chicken bones to a species of jackal that wore a huge ribbon bow on its neck, and crumbs to birds with unpronounceable names that strutted and preened before them.

Luncheon over, and the remains packed carefully away, she sat down on the seat he had improvised from his coat and a broken bench from the thicket. "Oh, dear!" she sighed. "I'm so dreadfully, shamelessly comfortable; I—" She sniffed inquiringly.

"What is it?" he demanded.

She sniffed again, this time turning toward the coat behind her head. Then she looked down at him where he lay at her feet, her eyes somber, accusing, though the dimple threatened the prim line of her lips.

"Why—what in the world?" he began, raising on one elbow.

"You have smoked the peace-pipe to-day—only a few hours ago," she accused. "With some wandering chieftain, I suppose; but you have not offered to smoke it here. Oh! I don't like it at all; I don't trust you!" So thoroughly had she entered into the spirit of the play that her eyes grew frightened, and she half rose.

"Sit down, woman!" he ordered, harshly, "and give me all you find in the right-hand pocket of my coat!"

Obediently, she laid in his hand the pipe, the match-safe, and a small red box.

"You darling little cave girl!" he commended, when the blue rings were mounting upward on the still air. The content in his eyes deepened at a sudden remembrance. He drew the little fat, flowered bag to him, and examined it idly.

"Oh, give it to me!" She almost snatched it from him in her eagerness. "I've just got to darn a pair of stockings to wear to-morrow; and it's five o'clock this minute."

Crandall smiled while she hastily threaded a needle; he chuckled when the darning dropped like a plummet into

the toe of a long stocking; but he laughed aloud when she vigorously attacked an inch-wide hole. The darning ceased.

"What are you laughing at?"

"We will go to the Park," he intoned softly, "and you can darn your stockings while I rustle for something to eat."

"Why—why, I've done it!" There was consternation in both eyes and voice. "I said I wouldn't, but I've done every single thing."

"Of course! I am used to being obeyed. There is something else you are going to do presently; but it can wait for—one—two—three—f o u r—five,"—he counted the ponderous strokes of the clock opposite—"for four hours."

"What am I going to do in four hours?" she demanded eagerly. If she had been his sister, the question could not have been more artless.

"You will know in a little while," he parried. "Now, put up your darning, and let's talk."

She rolled up the stockings and replaced them in the little lean, flowered bag that he held open for her. She shook out the white duck skirt, and tucked in the stray locks of her shining hair; then, "What about?" she asked, her hands clasped in her lap.

"About you."

"Oh! but I'm not interesting," she demurred; "you don't want to know—"

"I want to know what brought you to New York."

She did not reply for some time. Her face grew sad, and in the troubled eyes that regarded him abstractedly, Crandall read the loss of loved ones, the loss of home, and of the bitter struggle for existence later.

"Have you many treasures down there in your niche in the cave?" He changed the subject quickly.

"No; just a little chest of keepsakes I brought with me."

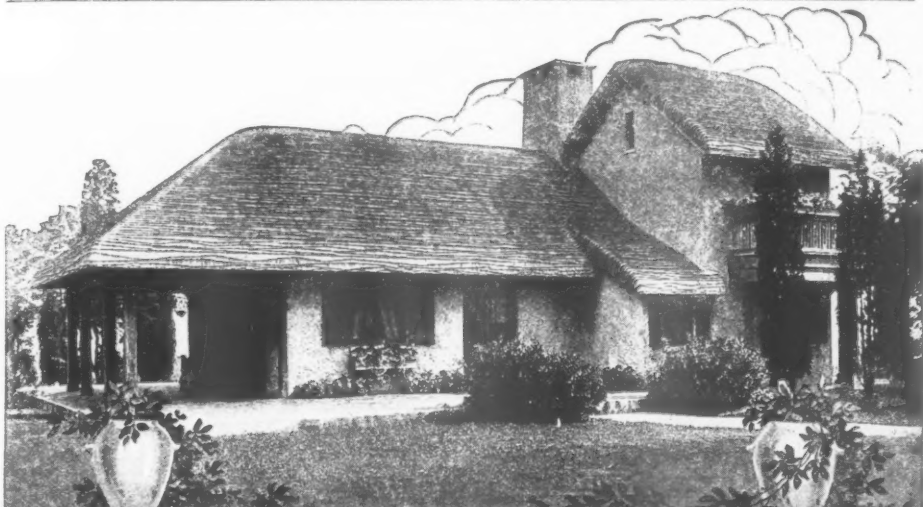
"Packed?"

"All packed, with the key in the lock."

"Good!"

"Why?"

"In a barbarous country, it is always best to be prepared for instant flight!"



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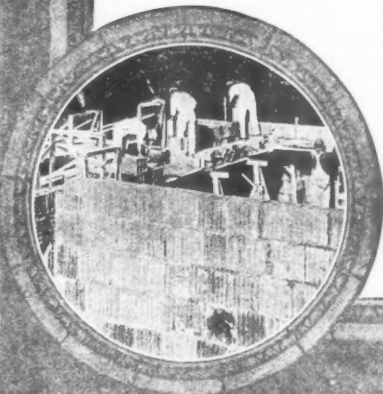
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"What do you mean?" She regarded him wildly.

"Oh!"

The sun sank, unnoticed, behind the circling wall of trees. Twilight, breathless, oppressive, settled about them. The pleasure seeking crowd of the afternoon disappeared, and the tenements replaced it with a pallid, panting horde. Crandall rose.

"I agree with the old tent maker," he said, smiling down into the girl's rapt eyes, "only, I would amend it to read: 'Thou, a book of verses, and the hamper yonder, were happiness enow.'"

"That's because you've never heard me sing in the wilderness," she objected, drawing the basket to her and beginning to unbuckle the straps.

"But I will!" he muttered grimly, "I will!"

"Will what?"

"Cease your idle twackle, woman; and set out the wherewithal that I may eat!" he responded harshly, pacing up and down.

"Now, I must go home!" she declared, when the last crumb had been fed to a swarm of little savages that seemed to have been drawn by the smell of food.

"Yes, home," he agreed; "you must go home!"

They left the hamper with the "caravansary" who had carried it to the lake for them; and, boarding an open car, rumbled slowly and fitfully southward. She drooped wearily beside him. He read in the pathetic face that the glamour of her day was fading before the inevitable to-morrow.

"Home," he repeated softly. He bent



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over her, making no attempt to conceal the growing tenderness in his eyes. "The roses about the door are nodding in the cool night wind; flower and shrub, tree bordered walk and the wide-eaved house, are white in the moonlight; and the odor of jasmine is over all."

"Don't," she whispered brokenly.

"The caravan starts within the hour. Your chest of treasures, this little fat bag, and you, are going along."

Amazed, she faced him; but the monotonous voice continued inexorably:

"Two days' journey hence, on the shores of a great lake, lives a Holy Man who is akin to me. Thither we will go—"

"Wh-what do you mean?" She regarded him wildly, clenched hands pressed into her paling cheeks.

"—and, kneeling reverently before him, we will say the words that will bind us together for all time."

"I—oh!—I can't! We don't know—"

"So you said when the clocks were striking two; they are now striking nine. You will do my behest now, as you did then."

His assurance did not keep him from regarding her with furtive anxiety as he lifted her from the car. They turned into Twenty-first Street, which was dark and quiet after the glare of the Avenue. He felt her slender body tremble against his arm as she fumbled with the gate; he saw the trouble in her eyes; but, too, he saw that the dimple was twinkling at the corner of her lips.

"Girl! Girl!" His dominance suddenly left him. "I love you! I can't go back without you! Wont you? Will you go? Quick, dear; say you'll go; it's nearly train time!"

"You're not prehistoric any more?" she asked, wonderingly.

"No, no! Just common every-day man, loving—longing,"—he looked at his watch—"frantic!"

"I—I wish you were," she said softly. "I saw a picture of one, once; and he—why, he was dragging a girl off—by the hair."

She swayed slightly. He gathered her into his arms with crushing force, and she nestled there contented.

